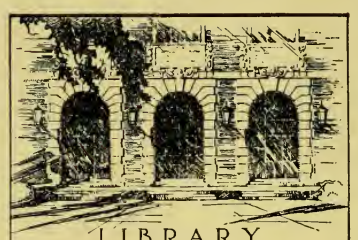

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ROMANCE

OF

THE PYRENEES.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

Vol. II.

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ROMANCE

OF THE

PYRENEES.

CHAP. I.

EVERY reason and argument that delicacy and inclination could deduce now agitated Victoria's mind for and against attending her appointment, but without conviction on either side, until the clock struck twelve; and she was startled by the sound into a perturbation of spirits destructive to the power of offering any confutation to the last suggestions of her mind, which inclination prompted, desiring her to remember that the stranger had promised to effect her escape, at the moment he gave liberty to his friends; that he might be the very being deputed

by Heaven to deliver her from destruction, which the extraordinary circumstances leading to their meeting almost induced her to believe; and, if she disregarded him, she might probably have to bewail her own wilful blindness to the mercy of Providence. The stranger too had informed her of the situation of his affections; and there could be little of indelicacy, whatever there might be of temerity, in it; and, to calm her doubts and apprehensions, had he not taught her the method of retreating into the library? And, independent of all these motives, had not in her possession some property of his, or his friends, of considerable value? and every feeling of equity must urge the immediate restoration of it.

These arguments, unanswered, proved victorious; and as the clock struck the last stroke of twelve our heroine tremulously and fearfully arose, and, looking cautiously around her, approached the map against which she was to press to gain an admittance into the church; but there she stopped, alarmed, and apprehending the eye of observation. She thought of the passage from

her chamber as being more secret; but the terrors of the preceding night made her shrink from the idea of going through the scene of them, unattended, except by fears, which the uncertainty of the propriety of what she was premeditating would most forcibly augment.

At length, after many efforts, she summoned sufficient courage to press the actuating spring; when immediately the pannel receded, and through a small aperture she beheld the stranger at the foot of the monument, standing with folded arms, and eyes anxiously fixed upon the chasm. It was now too late, even had she wished it, to change her intention; for he saw her on the moment, and, as she pushed the pannel open for admission, hastily sprung forward to receive and to assist her; and after closing the aperture with much speed and circumspection, he seated himself by her on the base of the monument, close to the spring that would re-admit her to the library, and in the most respectful and animated terms expressed his gratitude for the confidence she thus reposed in him.

Victoria entered the church with a fluttering heart and trembling frame; and for some moments her agitation deprived her of the power of articulating: but the respectfulness of the stranger's manners towards her, the soothing kindness of his address, the fascinating sweetness of his voice, and, above all, his delicacy and consideration in voluntarily placing her close to the only spot where an instantaneous retreat could be in her power, combined to calm her fears and perturbation, and in a very few moments restored her to perfect composure;—when a long and interesting conversation commenced, by which our heroine was soon convinced that the stranger possessed graces of manners, and refinement of mind, equal at least to Hippolyto; and, whilst she listened with delight, she trembled at the fascination which she found was every moment increasing fast. Yet, in defiance of this fascination, powerful as it was, Prudence never for one moment forsook her lovely charge, and Victoria only related to her attentive auditor what this sapient guide directed as necessary for him to be informed of: there-

fore, in mentioning Alonzo and her gallant rescue, she bestowed her high encomiums upon her deliverers, but forbore to express any thing that might lead to a suspicion of their disaffection to Don Manuel.

Her heart now persuaded her to believe the stranger ingenuous, benevolent, and sincere; but the more eloquently her heart spoke in his favour, the more conscious she became of the imbecility of her judgment, and more rigorous in her obedience to her intellectual monitors; so that she uttered not one word which prudence or reason could have wished recalled.

The stranger, on his part, had nothing of moment to communicate, except that his preparations for escape were in much greater forwardness, his plans more promising, and his hopes of a speedy termination to the captivity of those he wished to liberate much more sanguine than they had been on the preceding day. But the same mystery still enveloped him; and the interdict against his being more communicative upon some important subjects, he told her, was not yet withdrawn. But he so judiciously contrived

it, that not a pause in conversation occurred to yield Victoria an opportunity of departing until the unwelcome stroke of one sounded from the dome clock. Dejectedly he arose from his seat; Victoria sprung from hers.

"How rapidly has time flown since twelve!" said he, sighing, "only to creep more languidly until my good destiny influences you to honour me with another interview. May I, dare I, presume to supplicate for the happiness of seeing you again to-morrow, should nothing intervene to render your coming hither impracticable?"

Victoria hesitated; and the deepest glow of vermilion tinged her cheeks.

A heightened colour overspread the stranger's countenance too; and mournfully he said, "Alas! you fear to confide in my honour, and I am not permitted to remove suspicion from your mind."

"I entertain no suspicion where you are in question, believe me, signior," replied Victoria with an air of the most fascinating artlessness, while her blushes deepened, and her tearful eyes sought the ground to conceal her

painful emotions; "but I have no one to advise me, and I only hesitated to consider if my secret interviews with a perfect stranger would be a measure likely to meet the approbation of the dear and faultless being who was my instructor and my guide from my earliest days until this hapless period; and although she, alas! is now far, far distant from me, I should wish still to conduct myself as if her watchful eye was yet observing me."

"And if it were," said he with the most animated energy, "nothing could meet it but that which must give maternal transport to her heart. Beholding such spotless purity, could she see any thing but glory to herself, reflected from the refinement of those virtues her precepts strengthened, but which had a deeper source even from Nature's self? Were you now under the protection of your family, I would be one of the last persons upon earth, believe me, to urge you to these clandestine meetings; nor do I take advantage of the unguarded situation your ruthless destiny has thrown you into, to persuade you to less propriety of conduct than I should wish you to pursue

were you still in the bosom of your family; but that very hapless situation, which leaves you unprotected, calls on me to do it. It impels me on to serve you, and makes it absolutely necessary that we should sometimes meet, and there exists no other method of our doing so. The ideas that so lately actuated your conduct cannot now guide you, since now, alas! you must implicitly tread the thorny path your pitiless fate has here marked out for you. Deprived of that society most congenial to the delicacy of your mind, you yet acquiesce with patient submission to a doom your heart revolts from: then let me, I conjure you, not endure the pain and mortification of considering myself the most obnoxious of those beings your misfortunes have thrown you amongst, or the hapless one whom you most sedulously shun."

"It is true, alas! too true," replied Victoria in a sweet plaintive tone of the most touching sadness, "that I am bereft of all society but of men, all strangers to me. In Don Manuel's castle it is my inevitable doom, to which I must submit; and though my heart shrinks from it, it does not re-

proach me. But in coming hither to meet you, signior, there is no compulsion. Voluntarily I come, the unbiassed agent of my own free-will; and surely great is the difference between the acts we voluntarily commit, and those we are compelled to."

The sweetest smile of animated approbation played on the stranger's countenance; and his eyes were illumined with such a lively expression of admiration and gladness, that Victoria, astonished, embarrassed, pleased, and perplexed, turned her face aside to conceal from his attentive observation the emotions too visibly delineated there; and after a moment's pause the stranger spoke—

"I will advance nothing further, to urge you to a compliance with my request. For worlds I would not mislead such purity. I will therefore leave it to your own feelings to determine; and shall attend here at twelve to-morrow, in the pleasing but anxious hope of their candidly determining in my favour."

Victoria paused for a moment, and then said, with all that bewitching artlessness the

innocent ingenuousness of her mind inspired, "Ah, signior, you spoke too truly, when you said the ideas which so lately actuated my conduct cannot guide me now. Repugnant as my feelings may be to these *secret* interviews, I yet must not hesitate to continue them, since by them only can I possibly be informed of how and when that liberty you have so humanely promised me is to be effected. Forgive, I entreat you, signior, my appearance of ingratitude. Of your honour and integrity I had no suspicion, believe me; I only doubted the propriety of my thus meeting you. To-morrow I will again be here, should nothing intervene to prevent the performance of my promise."

The stranger, in evident transport, most gracefully expressed his gratitude for the confidence with which she honoured him; and respectfully taking her hand (which he would have pressed, in token of his thankfulness, had not the recollection of the delicacy of her unprotected situation withheld him), he led her through the pannel, first ascertaining there being no observer, and

with a pensively anxious look, and mournful voice, he bade her farewell; and whilst she was making her way, with trembling steps, into the library, his eyes followed her with such an increasing expression of tender solicitude and sadness, still holding the pannel open, that she was compelled, several times, to remind him of his imprudence, before he seemed to collect sufficient power to shut her from his sight.

Our heroine, now alone, sunk into a seat, so agitated by hope and fear, so pleased, so sad, so fascinated, so perplexed, that her mind was all in tumult with contending sensations; and it was some time after her return to the library before she recollected that she had not restored the picture. Sensibly shocked at her unpardonable omission, she drew the portrait from her pocket, blushing at her want of memory; and a deeper and a still deeper tint of vermilion overspread her cheeks as she looked upon this proof of her negligence, dwelling on the resemblance of every feature, which but so short a period before she beheld animated by the sense and sweetly interesting elegance

of the original, or saddened by solicitude for her safety. "For hers!"—Soothing idea, which she fondly cherished; and, almost happy, she continued earnestly gazing upon the picture, until the recollection of the stranger's having, in their first interview, declared his attachment to another, darted like a hideous phantom into her imagination, chilling her heart, and blighting at once the sweet budding blossoms of new-born hope.

"Alas!" said she, so absorpt in her painful feelings, that she was quite unconscious of articulating her thoughts—"alas! I had forgotten—he does love—but not me!" Large drops stole from her eyes. "Fie on this weakness!" continued she; "I will not, no, I will not cherish it." Hastily she wiped the tears away; and meaning to replace the portrait in her pocket, she turned her head to guide her hand, and beheld, reflected by the sun-beams, that were at that moment shining very strong upon the floor, her own shadow, and the lengthened one of a man, who seemed standing close behind her. Almost annihilated by confusion and terror, she started up and quickly turned; but no one could

she see; the shadow was gone, and with it every trace of any being having been there.

Trembling with dismay, she flew to a bell, and rang a summons for Teresa. She had been sitting at much too considerable a distance from the pannel to admit of that being possibly the method of so speedy a retreat; and she was too certain of the appearance of the shadow to doubt, for a moment, of some one's having been there. She felt no inclination to believe it a supernatural semblance; and that therefore some mortal man was absolutely in possession of the secret of her partiality stung her delicacy to the quick; whilst apprehension, lest any evil should be the consequence to the stranger, filled her mind with inconceivable terror; and so totally did shame and alarm subdue her, that she was unable to repress her tears when Teresa entered.

"Gracious Heaven! what can have happened to make you weep so piteously, dear donna?" exclaimed the poor old compassionating woman. "Why, sure, I thought your cares and fears all were lulled by Francisco, for this blessed day at least!"

As soon as Victoria's tears would permit her to speak, she, without mentioning the picture, informed Teresa of the alarm she had just sustained from the strange appearance of the shadow. Teresa discovered evident symptoms of fear, but none of surprise, at what she heard; for, notwithstanding the advantages of a tolerable education, her mind was so enervated by age, misfortunes, and the horrors she had for many years been doomed to witness, that it was now totally under the dominion of trembling superstition, which conjured up a thousand phantoms as appropriate to that library, where she almost believed the ghost of every author there, whether damned or not, haunted their own works.

Teresa took a seat by the desire of Victoria, who, inspired with courage by the presence of a companion, exerted herself to conquer her tears; and, although deeply mortified and alarmed, she at length became apparently composed; when she inquired "if Teresa had lately any account of Diego—"

"No, donna; I was going to take some

nourishment to him, by Pedro's orders, when you summoned me hither."

"But you sent it to him—"

"No, donna; I had no one to send it by."

"Then fly with it directly to him; think not of me whilst he requires your care; and if it is possible, soon comfort me with the intelligence of his being better."

Teresa immediately departed, and Victoria felt all her coward sensations revive; but which she lost no time in striving to subdue; and she was just beginning to look without fear around her, when she heard the approach of Sebastian; and dreading his questions as to how she had passed her moments of solitude, she hastily snatched a book from a shelf near her, and affected to be deeply engaged in the perusal of it; while, in fact, she was attentive only to catch an unembarrassed air as he advanced, and took a seat beside her.

"Well, my child," said he, kindly taking her trembling hand, "how have you been since we parted? I hope you have contrived to find some amusement?"

"I, I," she hesitatingly replied, "I, signior, have been striving to collect my distracted ideas sufficiently to allow me to read."

"And I, by coming hither unexpectedly, have discovered a secret." Pitiable was now the confusion and anguish of our heroine. She trembled, she changed colour, and her heart seemed ready to bound from its seat. Sebastian continued: "Highly as I have found your mind cultivated, I was not aware of your understanding Greek."

Victoria now for the first time observed the letter of the book she was holding, and found the character was indeed Greek. She was embarrassed; but relieved from an apprehension of the secret he had discovered being *that* her delicacy trembled at his knowing, her mind filled with sudden joy, almost too great for concealment.

"My knowledge, signior, is indeed by no means so profound," said she: "Teresa has but this moment left me; and eager to reassume my study, I snatched up a wrong book, and hearing you approach prevented my observing the ridiculous mistake."

"What then was your study?" replied

Sebastian: "we can now pursue it together."

Victoria averted her face to hide a blush that now overspread it; and, shrinking from the idea of entering deeper into the mazes of falsehood, she precipitately arose, and requested Sebastian, if not disagreeable to him, to accompany her in a short walk, as she thought the air might be of service in removing a strange degree of languor which had been stealing over her for some days past, and a severe headach that she was just beginning to feel.

Sebastian instantly arose in compliance; when, looking intently at her, he shook his head, and mournfully said, "Ah! I see you have not passed your time in reading—you have been weeping, my sweet child; and I fear you will, by this indulgence of grief, have bodily as well as mental illness to contend with. I would chide, were it possible to be angry with you:—but come into the grounds, and I will only tell you how it grieves me to see you thus."

He drew her hand with paternal tenderness through his arm, and led her to a shady

walk in the garden; where, with his mild and instructive conversation, he strengthened her fortitude, and beguiled her griefs of half their poignancy. But much as she confided in him, and highly as she venerated his virtues, she forbore to mention her alarm from the shadow, lest his inquiry should lead him to a substance from whom he could learn her humiliating secret, which she fervently wished no one further to participate in. At length they were summoned to the castle, where, *tête-à-tête*, they dined, attended by Juan, who gave them a very promising account of Diego.

CHAP. II.

Soon after dinner, Sebastian was obliged to depart, to fulfil an appointment with Francisco; but ere he left our heroine, he made her promise, that ſhould her too evident indisposition not be considerably better by his return, she would allow him to summon Pedro to prescribe for her; and Victoria, once more left alone, determined to avail herself of this opportunity, in a time of promised safety, of going to her chamber to make some arrangements there for the moment of her anxiously hoped-for escape. Accordingly she hastened thither; and as she gently approached Diego's door, she saw it open, and Pedro in the room, whom she beckoned to her, to inquire from him how all his patients were going on?—Diego, he assured her, was much amended; and Alonzo, with

his wounded confederates, in a very promising way. Happy at this intelligence, she entered her chamber, where she selected from her baggage every valuable trinket she found there, and formed them into two small parcels, to be taken in her pockets at the time of her escape. She then made many arrangements in her wardrobe, to conduce to her comfort during her continuance in the castle, which she now fondly hoped would not be very long; and as this was the first time of her ever officiating in this part of the business of a *fille de chambre*, she was not very expeditious; and, added to the tardiness of inexperience, she had to contend with the inactivity her fast increasing lassitude and indisposition naturally inspired; so that twilight had been for some time come on before she had completed her task, and the gloominess of the castle made it appear almost dark when she quitted her chamber to return to the parlour. Diego's door was closed; and hearing no noise issuing from his room, she concluded that he was sleeping.

Gently therefore she descended the staircase, the gloom of which, and the awful silence that reigned, increased the irritation of her nerves. But great and dreadful was the shock they sustained, when, as she was about to step from the staircase into the passage leading to the great hall, a strong ray of light suddenly gleamed upon her, and the black knight she had seen in the library crossed her path: his visor was up, and she beheld the cadaverous countenance of death. Victoria stopped, trembled, and held the balustrade to save herself from falling, while her distended eyes strained wistfully after the spectre. The light in an instant vanished, and all was a black void. She heard a deep groan, her heart beat painfully; again the light gleamed, again the knight flitted across her path, and the countenance was changed to the fleshless face of a skeleton. Victoria now wildly shrieked, and darted up the staircase, at the top of which she fell senseless into the arms of Pedro, who had been drawn by her scream from Diego's chamber.

Our totally insensible heroine was now carried by the humane surgeon to her own room; where assisted by Teresa, whom he summoned without disturbing Diego, who was sleeping, and whose well-doing Pedro knew would be materially impeded by a knowledge of the alarming situation of Victoria, used every possible method for her recovery; and at length her respiration returned, but not her perception. The terror she had just experienced seemed the signal for that indisposition which for some hours had been threatening her to begin its attack, which it now did with so much violence and rapidity, that the course of a few hours more found her in the delirium of a very dangerous fever, which for five days seemed to deride the skill of signior Pedro; during which period she had no interval of reason, and all the horrors she had encountered in Spain seemed ever present to her diseased imagination; while fancy pourtrayed the shade of both her parents still hovering near to guard her from every threatened evil; while the stranger from the church, the old

man and his beautiful daughter, she thought she constantly saw employed in her chamber, sometimes preparing medicines for her relief, at others plotting together to give her poison. But whatever her fancies might be, the reality was, that she was most carefully and tenderly nursed; and to this indefatigable attention, to the great abilities and exertions of Pedro, and to her own youth and unimpaired constitution, all aided by pitying Heaven, was she indebted for being snatched from the grasp of death; who for many hours appeared, even to those most interested for her fate, to have marked her for his immediate prey.

On the fifth day of her illness, Pedro, with unfeigned pleasure, pronounced her out of danger. Her senses soon returned, to animate her torpid frame, and she beheld no one in her chamber but Pedro, Sebastian, and Teresa; the two latter sitting, one by each side of her bed, anxiously watching her, as if she was their own offspring, and the only treasure they had in life.

From the moment her fever was arrested in its progress, and its virulence conquered,

Victoria visibly amended every hour, and her recovery was as rapid as her illness had been from its commencement to its height; and in a very short interval of time she was able to leave her chamber, though still weak and languid. To Sebastian and Teresa her gratitude was unbounded for their parental and tender care of her; and to Pedro she evinced her ideas of what she owed to his skill and attention, by offering him as handsome a gratuity as the state of her finances would admit of, aided by some trinkets of considerable value; all of which he respectfully but peremptorily refused to take, except one ring, which he said "he would have the honour of wearing, to remind him of the highest pleasure he had ever experienced in his profession—that of having been serviceable to her." But while her gratitude was thus forcibly awakened, she had much concern to mingle with another claim upon it; by finding that her indisposition had greatly increased Diego's, from whom a knowledge of it could not long be concealed; since from the vicinity

of his chamber he soon learned there was some unusual commotion in hers. And to lull the dreadful apprehensions that instantly presented themselves to his alarmed imagination, Pedro informed him of her illness, suppressing the greatness of it, and the serious fears he for many hours entertained for her life.

In the first moments of Victoria's return to reason, she informed Sebastian and Pedro of the dreadful alarm she had sustained from the appearance of the black knight; and every inquiry was immediately made by Francisco, who possessed the power of unlocking the secrets of all hearts within the castle, to find out the cause of such a terrible alarm—but without effect; and Pedro gave it as his opinion, that she was under the dominion of her fever when she descended the stairs, and that her disordered imagination had formed the ghastly phantom. This opinion was also Sebastian's, and Victoria wished to persuade herself that they were right.

Amongst the first feelings which agitated the mind of our heroine, upon her recovery,

was fear of the stranger's having effected the emancipation of his friends during her illness; and that her too cruel destiny had intervened to consign her to perpetual misery and captivity. Her failing in her appointment, unaccounted for as it was, she fancied might, from its appearance of rudeness and ingratitude, have disgusted him, and rendered him regardless of her safety. Yet he seemed too kind and compassionate to be easily induced to forsake a cause his humanity had led him voluntarily into; and he, who certainly had intelligence of many transactions in the castle, might also hear of her severe indisposition, and therefore feel no cause for displeasure, though still he might have been obliged to depart without her.

To relieve her mind from the insupportable agony of uncertainty precipitated her into leaving her chamber even before she found her strength sufficiently recovered for the exertion, and infinitely sooner than Pedro wished. But, for the first time in her life, Victoria was inexorable to the advice of her friends; and for this obstinacy fate seemed determined to punish her, in

the paternal tenderness and attention of Sebastian, who prevented all her efforts for gaining an unobserved entrance into the church, by his fear of her meeting with any new alarm, to occasion a relapse, inducing him never to leave her for a moment, except when he could consign her to the care of Pedro or Teresa; who, on their parts, seemed inspired with the same opposition to her wishes: and the disappointment this officious kindness inflicted increasing by delay, the torments of incertitude almost taught the placid grateful Victoria unthankfulness and petulance.

Day after day passed on without her being able to effect a visit to the church, to learn if all her hopes were blighted, and her doom misery and bondage; and at length, almost fretted by the irritation of suspense into a relapse, she one day at dinner discovered such symptoms of indisposition, that Sebastian in alarm summoned Pedro, who advised her retiring to her chamber, to indulge for an hour or two in a siesta; and to procure a tranquillising slumber for her, he would give her a gentle soporific. To

oblige Sebastian, whose wishes were now laws to our grateful heroine, she complied with Pedro's prescription, and soon fell, in despite of the misery of her mind, into a profound sleep, which continued several hours. At length she awoke, considerably refreshed, and more composed and tranquil than she had found herself for many days; when, according to Pedro's orders, Teresa (who had watched by her while she slept) left her to inform him that Victoria was awake; but in a few moments the poor old woman returned with looks aghast—

"Ah, donna! donna!" cried she in an agony of sympathising distress, "all the good signior Pedro's stuff has done you will soon be destroyed; for, as sure as we are both alive, I saw that wretch Garcias as I was crossing the hall; and no sooner did I see his hateful form than I hobbled back as fast as I could, to tell you to keep the door fastened, while I go to signior Pedro; for I am sure safety never dwells where that miscreant Garcias is."

Dreadful indeed was the shock this intelligence gave to Victoria. She now believed

the term of her promised safety was expired, and the hopes of her escape all blighted. In breathless agony she entreated Teresa to learn if Garcias was come back alone, and to return to her as speedily as possible. Teresa promising to comply, departed; when the trembling terror-struck Victoria fastened the door with every bolt, bar, and chain poor Diego had affixed to it, and then threw herself upon her bed in a state of unutterable anguish. For a considerable time she continued in a state of the most woeful despondence, before religion's powerful sway could calm her dejection, and restore hope, fortitude, and resignation. But that ever-tranquillising influence at length succeeded, and Victoria was beginning to collect the forces of her mind and her heart, to warm in the sunshine of animating hope and reliance upon the protection of heaven, when this new-raised structure of firmness was shaken to the foundation by a summons delivered by Juan, from Don Manuel, to favour him with her company at supper.

Words cannot express, nor the mind con-

ceive, the horror that now chilled Victoria's heart, forbidding it to beat, except with agonising woe, with trembling terror, and all the miseries of despair. Obedience to the mandate was inevitable; and with all the sad calmness which a certainty of destruction inspired, she was ready to attend Teresa when sent to conduct her down. Invoking the aid of every pitying angel and saint, she took Teresa's arm, and descended the staircase with a frame convulsed by apprehension.

"Ah! my dear donna, how my heart bleeds for you!" said Teresa, as they tremulously proceeded to the parlour. "I well knew how alarmed and distressed you would be. Don Manuel has been returned near three hours; and I was ordered not to go near you until I was sent to conduct you down. They have brought some more captives with them, it seems, and employment for signior Pedro too; so he could not come to you. And I could not see signior Sebastian, to tell him what an alarm I left you in; for Garcias has ordered him to keep to his own apartments for the present; and he,

poor gentleman, must obey. My master has seen Alonzo; who has made his story good, no doubt, since that wicked girl Hero is now out of confinement, and has been in the parlour this hour past. But, my dear sweet young lady, if you tremble so, and are so terrified, Pedro will have you again for a patient before the night's out; and should you be ill, you will not have those to nurse you now who would be tender and kind to you. But let me entreat you not to be so agitated and alarmed; for sure I am they never could have the heart to injure you. Indeed I have heard some of our most sanguinary ruffians say, were they ordered to assassinate you, they must do it in the dark, and with their ears stopped; for, were they to see your face, or hear the sound of your voice, the weapon of death would fall from their hands. And besides, you know, dear donna, Don Manuel himself dare not now harm you, as Francisco is your friend."

This last sentence penetrated in a gleam of comfort to the wretched Victoria's bleeding heart. Just as they reached the parlour, at the door of which Don Manuel, with

much apparent impatience, was in waiting to receive our heroine, to whom he gracefully and tenderly paid his compliments; and with an air of respectful gallantry took her passive hand, and led, or rather supported her, since without support she must have fallen, to a seat at the upper end of the table where supper was served; and taking his own place beside her, he announced her to those assembled, as "the fascinating mistress of his heart, the lovely queen of his castle, to whom he required the most profound homage to be paid by all who hoped to gain or preserve his favour."

Shocked by sounds so torturing to her delicacy, Victoria was awakened from her stupor of woe, to contempt and indignation, which she was only withheld from manifesting by prudence, who loudly called to her not to exasperate him; and while the crimson hue of shame and anger tinged her cheeks, she cast her eyes downwards to conceal the expression that strongly irradiated them; and she obtained sufficient command over her feelings to allow her receiving the further adulations and attentions

of Don Manuel, without betraying the disgust and misery he awakened and inflicted.

It may be well imagined Victoria partook not of the repast. Thought was her banquet, and comfortless it was; until Teresa's last words, like a succouring friend, darted into her remembrance, vibrating in her ears, and renovating her almost annihilated courage, by dependence upon heaven, through the medium of Francisco's protection; and at length she became sufficiently collected to admit of her observing the persons round the table, to learn whom she had to fear, and whom she might expect the consolation of sympathy from. No voice as yet, except Don Manuel's, had reached her ears; for, as his whole attention had been devoted to her, the rest of the party had preserved an unbroken silence.

Seated by Don Manuel's left hand, she beheld Hero pale and dejected. Victoria would have pitied her, had she not observed that whenever that deluded creature's eyes turned upon her there was a strong expres-

sion of sullenness and malice in them, which made her shudder.

Next to Hero sat a stranger, dressed in the habit of a Piedmontese peasant, a most uncommonly handsome man, of about three or four-and-twenty, whose air and deportment so ill accorded with his garb, that it required no great share of penetration to discover his rank in life being far above the one he by his dress seemed anxious to be classed amongst. Victoria was surprised; and her surprise was increased by a belief that she had somewhere seen a face like his. But her mind was not sufficiently at ease to remember at once, if she really had any knowledge of him, whether she had ever seen him before, or if it was only a resemblance to any other person that seemed to make his features familiar to her; and she was prevented from making any further observation, by finding herself most earnestly gazed at by the stranger, whose large dark and beautiful eyes were so riveted upon her face, that she could not again even steal a glance unobserved by him.

Next to this stranger, and at the bottom of the table, she beheld Garcias seated; the sight of whom awakened so many horrors in her breast, that she hastily turned her eyes from him to his neighbour, who was also her own, with anxiety to learn what his appearance portended. He was habited like the other stranger, and like him, too, his air proclaimed his garb beneath his rank. His face he seemed evidently studious to conceal from Victoria. But that solicitude, by awakening her wonder and curiosity, defeated its own aim; and in a few moments she contrived to see sufficient of his countenance to harrow up her soul; for, in beholding her profligate uncle, conte Vicenza, the being of all others from whom her spotless heart most recoiled, she believed herself irretrievably lost. Fear now, with its icy fingers, grasped her heart, almost preventing respiration; a death-like dew overspread her forehead; a ghastly paleness stole on her countenance; objects became indistinct; she closed her eyes, and with a chilling universal shiver sunk back in her chair,

The young stranger, attentive only to Victoria, first observed the alarming alteration in her lovely countenance, and instantly announced her indisposition. Don Manuel, in excessive consternation, ordered Pedro to be summoned, and then, with the rest of the party, gathered round her to offer every assistance; while Polydore, in the general confusion, took an opportunity to whisper to her (for, as he saw her observation of him, he well guessed the cause of her indisposition) entreaties, "if she prized her safety, and valued her liberty, to be circumspect, and conceal her knowledge of him and *his nephew.*"

The sound of conte Vicenza's voice proved more efficacious than any other remedy to our heroine. Terror gave to her limbs the power of supporting her; and, regardless of his entreaties, unmindful of every consequence, she started from her seat, and wildly darted to the opposite side of the room; where sinking upon her knees before a chair, and reclining her head upon the seat of it, she burst into a passion of tears which afforded much relief to her almost bursting

heart; and then, with uplifted hands, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven, she, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs, implored protection.

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed Don Manuel, "this lovely amiable creature's intellects are deranged."

"If so, signior," said conte Vicenza, in Italian, with much solemnity, "it is fortunate, for the signora at least, my being brought hither, as it has been for years my melancholy province to attend to the unfortunate of my species afflicted with the distempers of the brain. Few in Italy who have not heard of dottore Impazzato Delirio; and my fame has travelled even into this country; for I was now journeying from my own snug villa in Piedmont, to prove my skill in recovering, from a long deprivation of reason, the wife of a wealthy merchant residing at Tortosa, to whom I was sent for to——"

"Leave the merchant and his wife to the care of the d—l!" exclaimed Don Manuel, impetuously interrupting him, "and attend to the situation of this most fascinating of human

beings. If my dreadful apprehensions are verified, and that you restore her to that sense which was so lately the admiration and delight of all around her, liberty and twenty thousand pistoles shall be your reward."

Conte Vicenza, bowing profoundly, promised to exert his skill for the restoration of the poor signora's reason; and then advanced to Victoria, whose hand he attempted to take, but which she, with vehemence, snatched away.

"By this violence and obstinacy, signora," said he significantly, "you will destroy yourself, and totally prevent my serving you, which I could else do most essentially."

"You serve me!" exclaimed she in a tone of the most touching anguish. "Oh, Father of mercies, protect me! save me from his machinations!"

"Signior, alas! the poor signora is insane, past every doubt," said Polydore; "but I do not despair of being yet serviceable to her, although some of her fantastic phantasies represent me to her as an enemy." Again he attempted to take her hand. In a

moment Victoria was upon her feet, and would have fled to some one present for refuge; but, upon looking around her, she saw no one to whom she could apply for succour. The forlorn hopelessness of her situation struck with an agonising thrill to the bottom of her heart; a groan of anguish escaped her; and, tottering, she sunk into a chair, covering her face with her hands to shut out a view of those her soul sickened at beholding, whilst a torrent of tears again burst from her eyes.

"These tears," said Don Manuel in a tone of much interest, "these tears, I should hope, signora, are an auspicious symptom."

"I doubt not that they are," replied the conte; "and I trust, after an uncontrolled flow of them, we may have the satisfaction of finding the signora, if not more reasonable, at least more tractable."

"We have in this castle," said Garcias sullenly, "dungeons, with every requisite for coercion that you can possibly want for taming this refractory maniac."

At this moment Pedro entered. "I sent for you," said Don Manuel mournfully to

him, "to give into your care this lovely being, who is dearer, far dearer to my heart than language can express. But, alas! I now fear that even you can be of little service to her, since this gentleman, who professes to cure insanity, is of opinion her indisposition is seated in the brain."

Pedro darted a scrutinising glance, mingled with contempt, at Polydore, as he hastily approached Victoria, who now raised her beautiful and intelligent eyes with a look of piteous supplication, so expressive of her feelings, that Pedro was affected almost to tears, and, full of compassion, he took her no longer rebellious hand.

"The assertions of that gentleman, my lord, I take upon me flatly to contradict," said Pedro, after a short pause. "This indisposition is seated in the heart, not in the head; and my lovely patient will, I have no doubt, soon prove her mental health, by doing all she can to aid my medicines in conquering this agitation. But while I answer for this on my patient's part, I have demands to make upon yours."

"No prosing, Pedro," said Garcias sternly: "you understand me."

"I do," replied Pedro determinately, "and I hope Don Manuel understands me. I have been in his service now some years; have ever strictly done my duty, and will be awed into silence by no man. You, my lord, profess to prize this lady. If her fate really interests you, attend to me. The time is so short since, with the utmost difficulty, I snatched her from the grasp of death; since, with the greatest exertions of that skill you so highly estimate, I had scarcely power to bring her through one of the most dangerous fevers I ever witnessed, brought on solely by the agitation of her mind—(Nay, frown not, signior Garcias, I will speak—Life, you too well know, has lost its charms for me; therefore I fear you not—) so short is the space, I say, my lord, since I beheld this young and lovely blossom, blighted by storms she had not strength to contend with, drooping, and all but dead, that I can scarcely credit the evidence of my senses at seeing her, even delicate and weakly as she is. She wants the tenderest care,

the genial soil of peace, to save her yet. In short, unless something is done, and that immediately, to relieve this agonising agitation of spirits, to release her from every species of alarm, and restore her mind to at least comparative tranquillity, I will not, cannot, answer for the consequence."

Don Manuel, conte Vicenza, and the young stranger, in visible consternation, demanded of Pedro "what was to be done?"

"Donna Victoria must immediately retire to her own chamber," Pedro replied, "where every precaution must be taken to prevent the occurrence of any circumstance that can possibly awaken apprehension in her mind; and unmolested must she be permitted to continue there until all these alarming symptoms subside. Teresa must be allowed to remain constantly with her night and day, and I too shall be near at hand, to administer (if necessary) any more medicine than what I shall now hasten to give her, as I much fear I shall be obliged to pass the greater part of this night in the adjoining chamber with Diego, who has been for some time confined to his room by

a low fever, which I thought almost well this morning; but this evening he has become so suddenly ill again, that—"

"Diego's chamber adjoining hers!" said Garcias with surprise and surliness—"How dare he remove to the north wing?"

"He has not removed," returned Pedro; "but donna Victoria, whom my lord ordered him to obey, chose to have a chamber proximate to Teresa."

"D—d affectation!—But she shall no longer be indulged in such caprice," muttered Garcias.

"I am shocked, I am grieved, my life," said Don Manuel, addressing Victoria in a voice of insinuating softness, "that you should have chosen so comfortless, nay so wretched, an apartment for yourself. But surely, my love, now that I am here to guard, to protect you from every ill, you will not think it necessary to continue there. Come, come, my Victoria, I must exert my powers in striving to persuade you into obliging me. Return to your own chamber, my life. Do, sweet angel!—Victoria, will you, will you not oblige me?" And his obe-

dient eyes were now illumined with the almost resistless eloquence of tenderness and persuasion.

Victoria, with looks expressive of the horror this request inspired her with, grasped Pedro by the arm in speechless agony for protection.

"Not to-night at least," said the humane surgeon, "can a compliance with your request, my lord, be thought of. Nothing, I again declare, must be done to agitate my poor patient." Then advancing between Don Manuel and the conte, he spoke in a low voice, but with much earnestness, to the former. Victoria was now all ear, since her fate seemed depending upon the result of this conference, and yet she could only catch a few unconnected words of Pedro's.

"So ill as she has lately——I must have my way——Further apprehensions——Live this night through——Quiet alone can save——"

"On your life, Pedro, is this your real opinion?" said Don Manuel.

"On my soul it is, my lord."

" Don Manuel approached the lovely trembling sufferer. " For to-night then, my love," said he, " I will cease to urge my request, and will not oppose your little caprice about your chamber. But for this indulgence, my lovely, my beloved Victoria must remember I shall expect some concessions on her part at a future period."

Victoria would have thanked him for this small favour granted to her distress, had not the impassioned tenderness of his voice and manner, by heightening her alarm and agitation, kept her still silent.

Teresa, who had been summoned to attend our heroine to her chamber, now entered; when the conscious pride of superior worth inspiriting all her faculties, Victoria arose without aid, took Teresa's arm, and, with all the dignity her own virtues, and the contempt she felt for him who had plunged her into such a gulf of misery, animated her soul with, bowing to Don Manuel and the young stranger, without deigning to notice the rest of the party, she left the room, accompanied to the door of it by Don Manuel; who tenderly bade her adieu,

and in a low cautious whisper solemnly assured her, that nothing should occur during the night to cause her an alarm, or further to disturb that tranquillity he anxiously wished to behold firmly re-established.

Now, preceded by Pedro, Victoria hastened to her chamber; and not until she entered it did she perceive Hero was of the party, before whom, as she had too much reason to know her infidelity, she feared to express her gratitude to Pedro, or to implore his future protection; and perplexed and alarmed at finding this treacherous woman was to be her companion once again, she sunk pale and trembling into a seat, and burst into tears.

Pedro took a chair beside her, and, whilst he looked as if he wished to comfort her, gave orders to Teresa to go and have brought thither every thing that could be wanting for their fair patient's accommodation. "Be speedy," said he; "for I cannot leave her until your return, and I wish her soon to take the medicines I have yet to prepare for her."

Teresa instantly departed; and Pedro, wishing to speak a few words to Victoria

that might be incomprehensible to Hero, sat for some moments ruminating upon what method to pursue for that purpose. The Spanish, French, and Italian languages were understood by her; nor could he therefore have any hope, if Victoria was mistress of Latin, it would conceal what he wished to say from being in some degree intelligible to Hero; when, in the midst of this his perplexity, Victoria addressed him in a calm but plaintive voice—

"You are very compassionate, signior; and I think you will not refuse to give me the comfort of knowing, if there is a chance, a hope, of my being soon released by death from misery."

"That you soon will be released from your afflictions I have little doubt; but not by death, I trust."

"Ah! signior, I feel as if I could not long sustain such complicated miseries."

"Then you may rest assured, donna, that you will not long have them to sustain. The ways of Providence are inscrutable; but this much has ever met the Christian's eye. It afflicts us for our good, and never

decrees a burden for us that we have not power to bear."

"Ah! signior Pedro, you were not formed for an inhabitant of this castle. How came you here?"

"I shall answer by asking you the same question. But in being here I have been fortunate enough sometimes to mitigate, and sometimes to remove, the sufferings of my fellow-creatures."

"Oh yes, signior, my gratitude forcibly tells me that, and has engraven on my memory what I am indebted to your humanity and skill."

"The little skill which I can boast of I have derived from experience. For many years I visited various climes as an army surgeon, and from the English of my own profession, with whom I ever loved to associate, I learned much."

"From English surgeons? Then probably you understand their language?" Victoria eagerly exclaimed.

"I do perfectly. Do you?"

"I understand it tolerably, but cannot speak it fluently."

"You may then possibly like to hear how an English surgeon would prescribe for a patient in your case," said Pedro significantly; and immediately he asked in English, Did her attendant understand that language?

"Certainly not."

"Beware of her: and in no point whatever place the smallest confidence in her; for jealousy has awakened the most direful animosity in her mind. Alonzo, to effect his influence over her, to gain her aid to his project, taught her to believe she had subdued his heart; but since the failure of his presumptuous enterprise, he has taken no pains to delude her further; and she has discovered that he aspired to you, on whom the rage of her disappointment now turns; and vengeance brooding in her heart, she will gladly undertake any part that may assist her malice. Therefore be circumspect before her; affect still to fear; although I am commissioned by Francisco (who is deeply interested in your fate) to assure you that he will himself secure your safety. But hold! I must no longer speak in a language

unknown to that viper. Narrowly she observes us with a suspicious eye;"—then with a careless air, changing his language to Spanish, he continued, " Thus you see, donna, how different would be their mode of prescription to ours."

Hero, who had sat all this time in gloomy irascibility, with folded arms, and eyes beaming with malice intently fixed upon them, now smiled horribly with sarcastic incredulity. At this moment Teresa returned, attended by Juan, loaded with billets of wood, and every thing the provident Teresa thought might be wanting through the night. Pedro now departed to make up the medicines for our heroine; and Teresa, after carefully fastening the door when he and Juan retired, busily set about preparing every thing for her own and fair patient's accommodation; but not without many sarcasms levelled at Hero for neglect of duty. But all her eloquent severity was thrown away: unmindful of it, and unmoved by it, Hero sat with a countenance of sullen malignity, until Pedro returned with a medicine, which he desired our heroine to take the moment she was

in bed, where he wished her to go as soon as possible.

" If the medicine contains any thing soporific," said Victoria, " I cannot take it; as I would not for worlds deprive myself of the power of watching."

" There is only a sufficient quantity of opium in it to compose your spirits, but not for forcing sleep: besides Teresa, whom you know to be an excellent nurse, will sit up to watch by you; and I shall be in the next chamber with Diego, who has altered much for the worse within these few hours; and, ill as he is, it has been with the utmost difficulty I have been able to prevent his attempting to rise to perform his domestic duties as usual."

Victoria, well divining the source of Diego's increased indisposition, was sensibly grieved; but, fearing Hero, kept a profound silence upon the subject, and agreed to take the recommended medicine.

" And you, Hero," said Pedro, " must hasten also to bed the moment I leave the room."

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"I shall go to bed when I please, and not until then," replied Hero insolently.

"Go instantly to bed," said Pedro: "my patient shall not be disturbed by you; and if you go not into the one before you without delay, Francisco shall pay you another visit, and order you to one you may not perhaps find so comfortable."

Upon mention of Francisco, Hero became pale as death, and, instantly dropping from pride's high pinnacle, and completely humbled, prepared to obey the surgeon's peremptory command; and after giving Teresa some further orders, and bidding Victoria a good repose, Pedro departed; when our heroine retired to bed, and Teresa placed herself in the most advantageous situation for watching her interesting charge —who would have conversed with her, but found herself prevented by overpowering drowsiness. She attempted to ask a few questions, but became every moment more and more inarticulate. She strove to rouse herself, but in vain. Pedro had deceived her; for, thinking rest absolutely necessary

for her, he had administered a much more potent soporific than she was aware of; and ere many minutes more elapsed she sunk into a profound and tranquil slumber, which did not terminate until after nine o'clock the succeeding morning.

CHAP. III.

VICTORIA, upon awaking, found herself alone in her chamber. Instantly she arose, and speedily performed the task of dressing. Her distress had not lost its poignancy; but, from the medicine she had taken procuring for her such a long and tranquil rest, her spirits were more composed than on the preceding night. But long they were not allowed to continue so; for, scarcely had she completed her morning duties to her Creator, when Hero, with much malicious exultation pourtrayed in every line of her countenance, entered the room.

"I am come," said she curtseying with mock reverence, "I am come with Don Manuel de Bascara's most profound respects to the lady Victoria di Modena, the honour of whose presence below he humbly entreats; that, whilst signior Garcias and the other cavaliers are at breakfast, he may have

the transport of feasting his delighted eyes upon the transcendent beauties of the adored mistress of his soul."

The wounded delicacy and pride of Victoria's pure and noble soul, felt too indignant for articulation, and yet too powerful for concealment, emanated like angry lightning from her beautifully expressive eyes.

For a moment Hero shrunk into her own natural insignificance, and with something approaching to respect she spoke again—"Will not lady Victoria comply with Don Manuel's request?"

"Not any request sent from him to me by her," calmly but determinately Victoria replied, "who, forgetful of every feeling of delicacy, respect, and humanity, exultingly and wantonly insults the wretched and forlorn."

"Not so very forlorn," said Hero with a horrid smile of malignant triumph. "Lady Victoria has friends and champions enough in the dungeons of this castle; and if her ladyship will not comply with any request sent by me, Don Manuel, to evince his re-

spect and please her delicacy, must himself come hither to make his wishes known."

"Oh, Hero!" exclaimed Victoria in tremulous tones of the most touching distress and supplication, "if one feeling yet remains of that humanity which once actuated your mind, threaten me not with such horrors; and do not you accumulate my misery because fate has thrown me into your power: compassionate my sufferings—respect my distress. Forget not the best ornaments of the female mind, and I will unhesitatingly attend to your request, and accompany you wheresoever Don Manuel commands me to go." She moved towards the door; when suddenly recollecting Pedro's suspicions of Hero, she stopped, she hesitated: at length she continued—"Might I not be permitted to see Pedro or Teresa before I leave my chamber? I feel as if I much required the assistance of signior Pedro to compose my spirits, before I attempt to encounter the horrors of the day. Can I, think you, be allowed this small favour?"

"Certainly," replied Hero with a malign sneer, "most certainly: lady Victoria will

be allowed to see them, though not exactly where she wishes. But she who is all humanity and gratitude to her friends, will think it not too great a condescension to visit them in a dungeon."

Victoria's heart bounded painfully with the fell shock of horrid surprise and anticipating apprehension.

"In a dungeon!" she exclaimed, almost convulsed with grief and terror. "Explain —tell me. It is Pedro or Teresa I wish to see; where, where are they?"

"In the dungeons, with the rest of lady Victoria's wise champions; where, as signior Garcias has just said, she may find them fast bound in the chains of her friendship, and where signior Pedro may find some of his *English information necessary* for composing the spirits of himself and fellow prisoners, to enable them to go through the horrors of this day."

This was a heavy blow, benumbing to all Victoria's faculties. Her feet alone seemed equal to their function. Unknowing what she did, and yet seeming to wish for an escape from the unfeeling Hero, she fled

out of her chamber, and involuntarily stopped at Diego's, as if to seek comfort or refuge there. The door of it was open: eagerly she cast her eyes around the chamber in pursuit of succour, when the bed first awakened and riveted her most animated attention. It was not only untenanted, but all the bedding gone and the room totally deserted. She uttered a piercing shriek, and wildly articulated—"Diego! Where, where is Diego?"

"In another world," unfeelingly replied Hero, who had closely followed her.

"Dead! Diego dead!" Victoria screamed in agonising grief and terror.

"But why does the devout, the pious lady Victoria express so much surprise and consternation at the decrees of Heaven?—Sooner or later we all must die, as the sanctified Alberti has often preached to her."

Victoria's portion of misery seemed now completed, and she leaned against the doorcase of Diego's vacant chamber, in silent, motionless despair.

"Come, come, Don Manuel will become impatient at being so long deprived of a

sight of his charmer," said Hero taking Victoria's hand; which she no sooner touched than that lovely persecuted being, shrinking from her grasp as she would from contamination's contact, hastily snatched her hand away, and, springing into action, precipitately and wildly darted down the staircase —and, to the astonishment of Don Manuel and his companions, glided through the parlour into the library, and stationed herself at the door of Sebastian's apartment, where she vehemently knocked, and, in the sharp tones of reason chasing despair, fervently invoked "her venerable friend's protection." Don Manuel, concerned and amazed, followed her; and as he drew nearer to her, she, trembling with dismay, clung almost convulsed to the door-case.

"What! what means this distressing agitation, loveliest of beings?" said he in a soft insinuating voice: and he would have taken her hand, had not she, with all the cunning of approaching insanity, eluded his grasp and fled from him into the hall, where the ruthless Garcias soon overtook and caught the trembling fugitive.

"So," cried the wretch sternly, as he seized her in his arms, "you thought to be refractory, did you? But we have ways and means to exact obedience; and you shall learn to tremble at coercion, at the strait waistcoat, and other devices to bend your stubborn spirit."

The shock which the voice and grasp of Garcias inflicted at once recalled Victoria's wandering reason, and tears of anguish burst from her eyes, and convulsive sobs almost rent her agitated breast. In vain she struggled to get free, and supplicated for pity. Inexorably he bore her to the door of Gonzalvo's apartment, where he rung the dismal-sounding bell; and our hapless heroine felt something approaching to a gleam of comfort, in the idea of being near Hippolyto and her other friends, although in a dungeon.—Gonzalvo appeared.

"Lead to that cell," said the savage Garcias, "where we tortured our last refractory maniac to death."

Gonzalvo preceded them to the dungeons; and opening one of the first they came to, Garcias bore his wretched victim into it,

and placed her upon a truss of straw in one corner of the dreary cell.

Victoria had now no comfort left but in her reliance upon Heaven. She raised her hands and eyes, and devoutly, though silently, implored protection and fortitude from above. For a few moments Garcias observed her with ludicrous solemnity, and then, with a sneering laugh, entreated her not to keep so churlishly to herself all the good things she was saying—"Pray aloud for my edification," cried the profligate, "and I'll say Amen most piously.—Go on, go on, I beg you; for see the utility of praying. Your prison-doors are opening most evangelically, and a pretty little cherub coming in haste to fly away with you from the wicked."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Victoria, starting from her bed of straw, her indignation at the profane insult offered to her Creator by this impious ribaldry giving renovated strength to her bodily as well as intellectual powers. "Wretch! leave me, instantly leave me, nor longer shock my ears by your daring blasphemy: and know, I had in-

finitely rather be the forlorn, insulted prisoner, brought by your cruelty hither for the inhuman joy of further torturing, than still to possess the blessing liberty with a heart like yours. Should it be the will of Heaven, my prison doors will be opened in despite of you and your iniquitous associates. You have no dominion over me, but what is lent you by Providence for some wise purpose; and although the eyes of our Creator may have been long averted in horror from this castle, because you inhabit it, they will now turn, depend upon it, in pitying kindness at the supplicating voice of persecuted innocence."

"Te, ti, te, to!—te, ti, te, tum!—a most alluringly lovely preacher, by San Jago! so alluring, that by heaven I must kiss away those seductive little cupids that wanton in the ruby portals whence these divine tenets issue, ere one word of conviction can find its way into my apostate ears."

Indignant purity darted its fire upon the libertine through the eyes of Victoria. His insolent threat was repelled by a single glance. He dared not to advance: but with

an affected laugh to hide his mortification, he said with a malicious sneer, that as they were not likely to convert each other, he would retire and send the renowned dottore Impazzato Delirio to try his skill; and then, with a diabolical look of triumph at the misery and terror he had awakened, the barbarian departed; and before Victoria had time to recover in any degree from the horror his depravity and insolence had inspired, she heard the bars of her prison undraw, and conte Vicenza entered alone.

"Well, my lord!" exclaimed she with that determined composure, not the calm of apathy, but the firmness of a soul rising superior to the miseries which encompassed her—"Well, my lord! am I honoured with this visit for the purpose of your adding new insults to those I have already received from you? Or do you only come to view the splendor and convenience of that apartment your kindness in expelling me from the protection of my aunt has forced me into?"

"Cruel and ungrateful Victoria!" replied the conte, apparently much surprised and

disconcerted at the firm intrepidity of this address, " is this my reception, after all the dangers and difficulties I have encountered and am involved in for your preservation? Unwearied were the pains, and innumerable were the toils, which I endured in tracing you hither. With a hope of releasing you from your horrid captivity, I, with a chosen few, adopted the daring and hazardous attempt of entering the forest which proved so fatal to you; and we have ventured our lives, our liberties, our happiness, and voluntarily surrendered ourselves to the dæmons of iniquity, to be brought in chains to this their infernal dwelling, for the sole purpose of liberating my Victoria, or to perish in the glorious attempt."

" I have had such proofs," returned our heroine with undaunted firmness, " of conte Vicenza's intentions relative to the promotion and preservation of my happiness, that full well I know how to estimate those perilous achievements wilfully encountered for my advantage. But, my lord, if you have sufficient regard for me thus to hazard so much

for my preservation, why did you seek my destruction by attempting to blast that purity which could alone constitute my tranquillity here and happiness hereafter? Oh! conte Vicenza, when you banished me from my aunt, my guardian, my natural protectors, you should have sentenced me to some Lethean clime, to learn forgetfulness of what is past, before you could hope to obtain my favourable opinion. Youth is, I know, the season for credulity; but sad experience has given me knowledge which my years denied me. Once I believed you so very amiable, that I loved you as my parent, and hard I thought would have been the task of making me alter my ideas of you. But when the black page of deliberate villany was opened by yourself to my astonished view, when I there saw the destruction of the innocent unsuspecting orphan whom your own roof sheltered—the niece of your wife, committed to your care by a man whom you had ever (and with reason) called your friend—plainly and mercilessly marked out in unequivocal characters by you —I was painfully convinced that the tablet

of your heart contained not one spotless page whereon virtue or honour could trace an impression. The bond of confidence was by yourself destroyed; and other proofs than your own assertions (and incontestable ones they must be) of your penitence must I have, before I can behold you without contempt and horror."

Conte Vicenza, trembling and pale with rage and shame, vehemently articulated—"Unthankful infatuated girl! drive me not on to your destruction. Hither I came to save, to deliver you; but you disdain my kindness, are ungrateful for the perils I have run. Insult, scorn, deride me; but reflect, reflect before it is too late:—provoke not your own eternal misery and ruin. You know not what I have in my power."

"You have me, alas!" replied Victoria; "and too well have you taught me to fear you. But although fully aware of the helplessness of my forlorn situation, my heart will not submit to the debasement of veiling in dissembled courtesy the indignation my insulted purity has awakened. And do

you, conte Vincenza, in your turn reflect, that not a sparrow falls unnumbered by Him who formed it; and shall the destruction of an unoffending human being be passed unheeded by? No, no, believe me. Then deliberate, reflect, before you draw divine vengeance upon you; for rest well assured, the destroyer of innocence and helplessness will some time meet the dreadful day of retribution."

There was something so awfully impressive in the solemn but fascinating melody of Victoria's accents, in her interesting youthful innocence and beauty, while something like celestial fire animated her countenance, and illumined with rays scarcely mortal her ever expressive eyes, that Polydore felt for a moment the power of virtue, when he saw her "in her own shape how lovely!" But the influence proved only momentary.

"Well then," said he sullenly, "you despise my protection and succour, Victoria. You blindly urge your fate, and wilfully impel me on to abandon you to the mercy of the infernal wretches into whose

hands your ruthless destiny has thrown you; miscreants who subsist on plunder, whose sanguinary souls delight in murder, and every crime disgraceful to humanity."

"Well, my lord, I have no cause to fear death, although I have to place my confidence in you."

"No, no, Victoria, do not believe death is the fate that here awaits you. No, no, no; a nobler doom will be yours.—Don Manuel—the just, the good, humane Don Manuel, captivated by your heavenly beauty, means to make you his on terms which may not prove quite so congenial to your fastidious feelings."

Victoria, shrinking with horror and the rankling pain of wounded delicacy, found it difficult still to preserve her firmness; but, after a pause, she calmly answered—

"Such, too, was the design of the just, the good, humane conte di Vicenza; and as he has preceded Don Manuel in meditating my destruction, so does he precede him in my abhorrence: and know, my lord, let my fate in Don Manuel's castle be as dreadful as vice can plan, and cruelty per-

form, I prefer it, infinitely prefer it, to the dangers of your protection."

" Fiends and furies!" exclaimed the conte in a paroxysm of rage and disappointment—" So then, so then, infatuated girl, it is your own choice to become the mistress of the miscreant Manuel!"

" Choice, conte Vicenza," she indignantly replied, " has been by you long banished from my society; and the unoffending daughter of the benefactor of your youth is by your means become a poor pliant machine, only to be actuated by the caprice of others."

" Will you hear what I have to say, or not?" cried the conte, vehemently grasping her struggling hand.

" Even in that you see, my lord, choice is denied to me. If here you speak I must hear you: I have no place of retreat. This dungeon is not very spacious, and I am a prisoner in it."

And now our persecuted heroine could scarcely command her feelings sufficiently to procure silence; while conte Vincenza again profaned her ears by a repetition of

his debasing passion for her, glossed over with all the insidious sophistry his artful soul suggested.

"In a fatal moment," said he, "my ardent but ill-fated passion lulled propriety, and vanquished my struggling honour; and I had the unjustifiable temerity to shock your spotless purity by an avowal that has ever since overwhelmed me with shame and remorse. In the moment of resentment you complained to the duchessa; who, although she beheld me the most contrite of penitents, affected still an alarm for your safety, and confined you to your own apartments. She was alarmed, but not by me, nor for your peace, Victoria. It was for herself she trembled.

"Be not too much shocked, my amiable, my spotless Victoria, at the depravity I am compelled, alas! to disclose of her you have been taught to estimate and reverence. Grieved am I to say, the duchessa is not that unexceptionable being she has appeared to your unsuspecting innocence; and her licentiousness has weaned my once ardent affection from her. Long did I behold

even her faults through the veil of partiality; but at length your bright excellence appeared in contrast, and dissolved the charm. Partiality no longer deluded my senses; the mask dropped, I clearly saw, and despised.

"The comte de Montfort has been long the darling object of this abandoned woman's affections; but he was deaf to the syren while your superior attractions were in view. You therefore were confined; the pretence, my conduct. But the comte was importunate in his solicitations; for, being allowed to see you, and irritated by her inflexibility, he threatened to carry you off by stratagem. The jealousy that this threat awakened caused her sudden resolution of sending you into Spain—a project which she too fatally executed unknown to me. But how can I pourtray my phrensy and despair, when the cruel step she had taken was revealed to me! Almost frantic, I flew in pursuit of you; but vain my eager researches, until the only survivor of those who attended you in your fatal journey appeared before me, and related your calamitous fate. Wild with my dreadful appre-

hensions, I boldly formed a project for your rescue. I selected a chosen few to accompany me; and whilst I was engaged in preparations for my glorious enterprise, the weak de Montfort was caught in the duchessa's toils; and such proof was given to me of the culpability of her conduct, as to inspire a dear, a rapturous idea that I have fondly cherished.

"The duchessa's cruelty to you added hatred to my former disgust; and I rejoiced at her infamy in the flattering hope of honourably obtaining my adored Victoria.—Immediately, therefore, I had this contract drawn out," and here the conte produced a parchment, "which if you will now sign, promising to become my wife as soon as the tardy law will allow it, I will take you from this place of horrors, and convey you without delay to the convent where your Ursuline resides. I then will open the process for obtaining a divorce from the duchessa; and the moment that is gained, our union, my Victoria, shall take place."

Victoria was inexpressibly agitated while Polydore was speaking; and although she

felt additional horror and contempt for the depraved and ungrateful wretch who could rejoice at the infamy of a wife who had raised him from indigence to affluence, she forbore to express her feelings, and only said, while she viewed him with the steady eye of observation—

"By what miracle, conte Vicenza, did that attendant who alone escaped the massacre, since he did not accompany me hither, find out the means of directing you to the place of my captivity, so impenetrable as it has for ages been to all intruders?"

The conte hung his head, visibly disconcerted, and remained silent.

"Ah, conte," said Victoria, "you should have displayed a little more ingenuity in the formation of a tale intended for the ear of those not quite devoid of common sense."

"My story," replied Polydore, "is as perfect as truth can make it; and I only hesitated because I was grieved at your suspicions of my probity, compelling me to break a solemn promise. But I must sacrifice all my scruples to obtain credit with you, faithless as you are to every appearance

of virtue in me. The surviving domestic could only guide me to the forest, from whence he saw you and your female attendants borne away. In the forest I could gain no intelligence. I therefore made every possible inquiry in the neighbourhood; and at Bascara Providence threw in my way a disaffected follower of this miscreant Manuel, who for a considerable bribe, and upon a solemn oath of secresy, led me to the place of my Victoria's confinement, planned the scheme for my captivity, and also for your deliverance."

Although Victoria saw much improbability and inconsistency in the conte's narrative, she was not in sufficient health of mind to enter into any disquisition with him; and, contented in her incredulity, she made no reply. Polydore, construing her silence as propitious to his wishes, now artfully entreated her, with every specious argument his subtile imagination could supply him with, to sign the contract. He soothed, he flattered, implored, threatened—but in vain. Victoria's inflexibility seemed, if possible, each moment to increase; and in all the

rage of mortification and disappointment he quitted the dungeon, telling Victoria he would give her twenty-four hours to consider well ere she sealed her own perdition: at the expiration of that interval he would return to know her final determination; when, should it prove inauspicious to his wishes, he would then undeceive Don Manuel relative to her insanity, which he had alleged to gain uninterrupted access to her; and then, abandoned to the power of merciless villany, she would too late repent her ingratitude to him.

When conte Vicenza departed, Gonzalvo secured the door; and Victoria was uninterruptedly left to indulge feelings so miserable, that it was some time before such a trifle as a small crumpled bit of paper upon the ground arrested her attention. Its lying close to the spot where the conte had stood when he drew the contract from his pocket giving it consequence in her estimation, she hastily snatched it up; when she found it to be part of a torn letter, written in a hand totally unknown to her;

and her own name meeting her eyes, she eagerly approached nearer to the dim light, and with increasing horror read—

" Scheme portends; such
Lady Victoria is in captiv
No pity for the horrors she
by terror, such as our
inevitably fall into the snare.
chessa's wealth goes from you
Your prodigality and love of dissipa
Your victim has some property; as
the brother, as you say, can easily be assassi
manage with secresy, and say he fell in batt
the surrounding perils of a soldier's life can cover
come in by law for the immense possessions of conte Arios
can send three, who may be depended on as good
not flinch at the sight of blood they spill
remit more money without delay."

The blood chilled in Victoria's veins, and every nerve was convulsed with horror. Tortures should not now force her to become the wife of conte Vicenza; and, consequently, she should be doomed to suffer, in her dreadful captivity, all the cruelties which merciless villany might inflict. The prospect was almost too shocking for human fortitude to look upon; and shrinking

at miseries so unmerited, the question of "Why should a life so (I hope) guiltless as mine has been call for such signal instances of divine displeasure as threaten me?" now suddenly thrilled through her mind; and the answer, so replete with conviction of Heaven's beneficence, gleamed with such comfort to her heart, that she fondly cherished the hope of succour it inspired; and, in contemplating the mercy of Providence, she insensibly sunk upon her kness to implore its protection. She soon found the efficacious balm distilled from the influence of piety pouring its aromatics into her lacerated mind. But from this consoling intercourse was she at length disturbed by a sudden noise of chains violently clanking at some distance from her cell, which was immediately succeeded by a dreadful confusion of voices, and clashing of swords; which soon ceased, and left no sound upon the appalled ear but that of doleful cries and groans of anguish torturing to humanity. These too by degrees died away, and all was again silent as the grave.

Our heroine, conceiving the massacre of

her friends had taken place, was soon relieved from the most acute agony her mind had ever experienced, by a total suspension of every faculty. Alike insensible of existence, or the woe her heart was full of, she continued for a length of time, until awakened from her death-like stupor by a rough shake from Garcias, who had entered unheard by her, accompanied by Juan. For a moment or two she could form no idea of who he could be, or of her own situation. At length recollection returned with all its horrors; and believing Garcias was come to terminate her existence, she quickly exclaimed—

"I am ready."

"I dare say you are," replied Garcias deridingly: "as you have not broken your fast to-day, you must be ready for your supper, which Juan has brought you, and I am come to have the happiness of doing the honours of the table."

Juan hastily laid a cloth, and spread some food upon the table. Garcias desired Victoria to eat; but her heart was so full of sorrow, that her appetite was gone, and she

could not comply. Garcias now sternly commanded her, and she strove to obey, giving him looks of supplication for mercy so indicative of misery, that no heart but his own could have withstood them.

" Summon Lopez," the savage at length roared out. Juan obeyed; and a man of a surly appearance and terrifying aspect immediately entered, bearing in his hand an instrument of an extraordinary shape, which our poor trembling heroine conjectured was for torture.

" Oh!" she exclaimed in the sweetest tones of plaintive entreaty, " Oh, for mercy, kill me at once, and do not torture me!"

Garcias for some moments beheld with the most savage delight and exultation the terror he inspired her with, and then replied: " Kill you! No no; you are doomed to amuse us a little longer; and instead of killing you, I am humanely intent upon preserving your life by making you take nourishment; and that instrument, which so alarms you, is nothing more than what we use to compel refractory maniacs to take their food with. It will put you to

no great torture; it will only break away those beauteous rows of pearl which now adorn those coral lips. Approach, Lopez, and perform your duty."

As Lopez advanced, Victoria shrieking pushed the instrument from her. "I will eat," cried she in tones of terror and anguish, "indeed I will, if you take that horrid implement away."

Garcias ordered Lopez to retire; and now we find it totally impossible for our feeble pen to give an adequate idea of Victoria's sufferings, while she was barbarously compelled to swallow food her appetite recoiled from and her senses sickened at, while her busy fancy presented her with the horrid image of poison in every mouthful. Tears gushed in torrents from her eyes, and a death-cold dew overspread her forehead, as she thus gratified the savage cruelty of the arch-fiend Garcias, who then poured out a glass of wine for her, which she eagerly drank to prevent herself from fainting. He then filled her another, which she took without opposition; but upon his handing her a third, she earnestly entreated

him to excuse her compliance. But the monster was inexorable, and she was compelled to obey; and the moment she did so, Juan cleared the table, and with Garcias departed, leaving Victoria to those miseries they had increased.

Our persecuted heroine, conceiving that poison had been mixed with the food she had been compelled to take, hastened to perform those duties her pious heart suggested, and then threw herself upon her wretched pallet, in dreadful expectation of the tortures the poison might inflict.

Silent as death was all around her. The lamp burnt dimly; and with nothing to disturb her but her thoughts, she, whether from fatigue of mind, or from the unusual quantity of wine she had been forced to drink proving a soporific to her, soon fell into a profound slumber, which lasted several hours. But at length she started from it in a state of pitiable alarm, her whole frame shaking with excessive tremor, a cold dew overspreading her forehead, and that kind of awful horror hanging about her which often pervades the human faculties on

awaking from a frightful dream; while she felt scarcely aware of any cause for her present sensations but her having fancied, as her slumber broke, that she heard a doleful cry of " Murder!" near her.

Time was scarcely allowed her to collect her almost torpid senses, when she distinctly heard, pronounced in a hoarse and hollow voice, issuing from the most distant part of the dungeon, " Prepare for death!"—This was a terrible blow to Victoria's courage, and superstition exerted its trembling influence in full dominion over her. She believed it to be a supernatural warning; and although expecting death, a herald proclaiming it in such an extraordinary way was more than the mental strength of eighteen could sustain.

Appalled with awful terror, and conceiving herself called upon to pay her debt to nature, she aimed at raising herself upon her knees, to breathe her last words in prayer; and while striving so to do, a noise assailed her ears like light footsteps in the dungeon. Wistfully she looked around her, yet nothing could she distinguish of what

she sought. The lamp, almost expended, threw its feeble and expiring rays not two inches from the spot on which it stood. She listened in breathless agony, but all was again silent. Panting with apprehension she strove to recall her fleeting courage, and made another effort to kneel; when at the moment she effected her purpose a figure glided majestically by her, but of what form the want of sufficient light and the excess of her fears allowed her not to ascertain; and as it passed she plainly saw it wave something mournfully, and in that instant the dying lamp suddenly expired, and all was total darkness.—Victoria clasped her hands, and prayed with fervor. The mysterious voice again assailed her ears, more hollow and discordant than before, proceeding from another part of the cell. "Wretched victim!" it said, then paused. Victoria's knees smote each other. Again she heard it, but in a cadence of woe so soft, so pathetically low, so mournfully tremulous, as if its power of voice was dissolved in pity.—"Expect no mercy."—Again it paused; and then, as if in

who

short interval the feelings that actuated it had undergone a total revolution, it screamed out discordantly and frantically loud, " Fiends! tortures! blood and murder! murder! murder!" Its articulation was now lost in a convulsive laugh, and Victoria fell upon her face almost deprived of senses.

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CHAP. IV.

From this state, so nearly approaching to insensibility, was our heroine recalled by conte Vicenza and Gonzalvo, who entered the dungeon in about an hour after she fell. Pale, trembling, and dismayed, she arose from her pallet; but without power to stand, she sunk upon the only seat her prison afforded. Wistfully she looked around her; but nothing could she see of what had so dreadfully alarmed her. Gonzalvo trimmed, lighted the lamp, and departed, leaving Polydore to persecute still further the hapless innocent victim of his villany, and who now beheld him with additional abhorrence; for, beside the depravity of his conduct towards herself, he now stood confessed to her as the premeditating murderer of her beloved brother. Her soul sickened at the presence of this arch fiend; her frame was chilled with horror as she viewed him, who

hastened to demand her final determination. But ere she replied, she mentally addressed a fervent prayer to heaven, to support her in a firm adherence to those resolutions her sense of rectitude inspired; nor to allow the horrors she had in that dungeon encountered, or those more dreadful which she might be threatened with, to enervate her mind, and terrify her from that path which virtue herself marked out. At length she answered, and spoke, with firmness, a determined unequivocal negative to his vile proposition.

Again the conte urged his suit with all the sophistical rhetoric a mind profound in art could supply him with, threatening every calamity to her which he knew her spotless soul would revolt from if she should persist in her present determination. But instead of beguiling her reason, or intimidating her firmness, he had the mortification of each moment perceiving the tones of her mind visibly acquiring new power; and, irrevocable as death, he found her resolution to encounter every horror Don Manuel and his dæmons might torture her

with, rather than yield to a measure replete with danger to her beloved brother.

"You then, Victoria," said the conte in a phrensy of rage, disappointment, and mortification, "you then decidedly reject my honourable protection, and willingly remain here a prey to vice? Little did I imagine depravity had shelter in that bosom; and that you, whom I fondly thought the most spotless child of virtue, would voluntarily await a fate that purity would shrink from."

Victoria darted a look of ineffable scorn upon him—"Whatever fate may await me here," she replied, "I prefer it, infinitely prefer it, to becoming the wife of a man whom every good property of my soul recoils from. Great is the difference made, in the records of heaven's chancery, between voluntary and involuntary action. Unwillingly was I brought hither; by force am I detained here; and whatever may befall me through the villany of others my Judge will not condemn me for. But were I to sign that contract, knowing, as I do, the dreadful crime it would occasion—yes,

conte Vicenza, knowing it would be the *fiat* for my beloved Alphonso's assassination—my soul would find no mercy. I act from principles which tortures shall not shake."

Her manner was even more decisive than her words. It spoke not the transient enthusiasm of the moment; its language was the calm firmness of a soul resolved; and conte Vicenza, overwhelmed with shame and amazement at the knowledge of his meditated assassination of conte Ariosto being no secret to her, quitted the dungeon in a fermentation of contending passions, with their concomitant miseries, and uttering a thousand threats of vengeance for her obstinacy and ingratitude; when Victoria, believing his departure to be the signal for Garcias to return and renew his savage sport of tormenting her, and feeling that her enfeebled frame could not long sustain such cruelty, calmly and humbly sunk upon her knees with all the fervent piety of a true Christian, without a single murmur at a doom so sad and unmerited; satisfied that death would soon rescue her from every ill: and, as a Christian devoted to die with-

in a given time, she hastened to prepare for the awful and inevitable moment of dissolution; and in about four hours after the conte's departure, had an assassin entered her cell, she would have met the stroke of death undismayed. But not with such heavenly serenitude did she receive Don Manuel, who appeared alone.

With the air and manner of a most ardent and respectful lover he approached the lovely, agitated, persecuted Victoria; to whom he apologised, with all the insinuating blandishments his designing heart and flowery eloquence could supply him with, for the ungentle treatment she had received through the unfortunate supposition of her mental derangement; but that now, from the ingenuous confession of dottore Impazzato, who had just acknowledged his reprehensible mistake, and proclaimed her intellectual health, he was come to implore her pardon, and to conduct her from that wretched abode where ignorance had placed her.

He now offered his hand to lead our heroine, who accepted it with the tacit resig-

nation of hopelessness, but with a tremor so excessive, that it was with difficulty she proceeded from the dungeon to the library, where conte Vicenza, his young companion, Garcias, and Hero, were assembled.

Don Manuel placed his lovely trembling captive upon a sopha, and seated himself beside her; when in the showy flowers of his rhetoric he hastened to declare an ardent and unchangeable passion for her, and his unalterable resolution of making her his immediately, by the most irrevocable ties which the laws of that community he had the honour of belonging to would admit of. Then he informed her, without waiting for her reply, or indeed seeming to think one necessary, that on the table before her lay the contract for their union, which had already been signed by him in the presence of his friends and vassals, before whom she must now affix her signature; and concluded with an artful insinuation of no person, however beloved, daring to dispute or disobey his decrees with impunity.

Victoria, shocked and dismayed beyond expression, scarcely retained the power of

respiration; while Garcias, with savage exultation, pushed the table close to her, on which a parchment and an inkstand lay: and upon a signal from Don Manuel, several of his ruffian soldiery rushed in, some under arms, and some bearing horrible and terrific implements for torture; and in an instant they ranged themselves in awful divisions before the three unoccupied sides of the table—cruelty and death gleaming in their most direful aspect from each grim, dark, and ruthless countenance.

Don Manuel, snatching Victoria's hand, put a pen into it and placed it on the spot where he desired her instantly to sign her name. She panted for breath; her senses in alarm were all forsaking her; and coward fear was about to guide her trembling hand in striving to trace her signature, when a thought, suggested by her expiring reason, of its being the very contract which would bind her to conte Vicenza, recalled at once her fleeting faculties. Precipitately she arose, and, dashing the pen indignantly from her, exclaimed with emphasis—

"Sign my brother's death warrant!—

Never!—Men take your victim, and Heaven receive my soul in innocence!"

"Oh! matchless virtue!" exclaimed Don Manuel; while Garcias, with horrid imprecations, consigned our heroine and her innocence to his own black patron; and, rudely seizing her, affirmed with an oath that he would that instant make her sign the contract. But from this profane wretch's touch her pure spirit recoiled, and she sunk upon the couch she had just arisen from as apparently lifeless as if the ruffian soldiery had performed the task she had reason to believe assigned to them: and several minutes elapsed before she betrayed the smallest symptom of returning respiration, and many more before she opened her languid eyes, when she found herself extended upon the couch, and Don Manuel, with tenderest solicitude, bathing her temples with restoratives; the young stranger applying salts to her nose; while, in an attitude of much anxiety, conte Vicenza was standing bent over the couch, with one hand resting against the wainscot. Don Manuel and the young stranger had scarcely time to inquire

how Victoria found herself, when the conte uttering a cry of horror, his hand fell from its resting-place, his eyes, nostrils, and mouth distended with strong expression of dreadful amazement, while his looks were fixed in earnest gaze of speechless dismay upon the wainscot. Fear's cold tremor pervaded all his faculties; his breast heaved convulsively, and he at length fell to the ground in a swoon; while nothing was seen by any one else present that could at all account for such consternation, and such a serious effect.

The general attention was now of course turned from our heroine to conte Vicenza; and Don Manuel choosing to have him removed to his chamber, h was accordingly conveyed away; when Victoria happily found herself relieved from further persecution for the present. When supper-time arrived, Don Manuel, with much appearance of tender solicitude, supported our heroine to her accustomed seat at the supper-table. Garcias and Hero following, took their usual places. Nothing of Polydore or his young companion was heard of

or seen, and an almost total silence prevailed. Garcias, gloomy and sullen, evidently betrayed, by the glances of malignant triumph he occasionally directed to Victoria, that he was brooding new mischief. Don Manuel was abstracted, and often apparently lost in painful musing, but by no means inattentive to our poor heroine when out of these frequent reveries. No, indeed; far from it: often during his fits of meditation his eyes were riveted in pensive earnestness upon her; and when he addressed her, his looks and voice were softened to a degree of tenderness that seemed the genuine effusion of the purest feelings of susceptibility.

At length this almost silent meeting was dissolved by Juan, who at the usual hour appeared to conduct Victoria and Hero to their chamber. Juan alone performing this ceremony darted a pang of bitter affliction through the feeling heart of our heroine. Where now, alas! were Teresa, Hippolyto, and Diego? She burst into tears at the horrid retrospection; and with a voice broken by agonising sobs she bade Don Manuel

good night, and with a sorrowful heart and streaming eyes followed Juan to her gloomy chamber. Passing Diego's room, now desolate and uninhabited, added new poignancy to her grief, and in an agony of tears she threw herself into a seat between her own bed and the secret passage to the church.

Juan hastened to trim the lamp, and retired, leaving our poor heroine alone with the woman whom she had been taught to believe meditated the most direful mischief against her, and the determined deadly malice of whose looks added considerably to her apprehensions. She trembled at the idea of enclosing herself with such a bitter foe, and shutting out all assistance should Hero's vengeance lead to her requiring any. But her fears of conte Vicenza and Garcias conquering every other, she with trembling hands, and eyes full of suspicion fixed upon her companion, barricadoed the door, and then returned to her seat close to the secret passage; through which she resolved to retreat, should Hero approach her with hostile intent: and having placed the lamp conve-

niently for taking with her, she justly concluded that Hero, left in total darkness, and unacquainted with the actuating spring, would be unable to pursue her.

Having now arranged the only plan of safety she had in her power to adopt, Victoria glanced her streaming eyes around her gloomy chamber, where every thing which met her view bespoke Teresa's absence. The beds unmade—the ashes littering the hearth since the fire of the last night save one—the collection of culinary utensils still remaining, which poor Teresa's kindness had collected there to prepare nourishment for he—all, all was comfortless: and the desolation of her apartment brought the forlorn misery of her situation more forcibly into her mind; and she sobbed, nay almost groaned, from the anguish of her heart. She was now left friendless, and destitute of every aid. She clasped her hands in an agony of despair, and, starting from her seat, exclaimed, in the most piteous cadence of affliction, "Where, where have I now a hope to rest upon?" Suddenly the whole

expression of her countenance changed; she sunk upon her knees, her hands still raised, and firmly she said—

"In Heaven, upon my God!"

Every idea of fear was now lost in the pure fervor of sincere piety; and for upwards of twenty minutes Victoria lost the recollection of every thing but the omnipotence and mercy of Him whom she was humbly addressing. The potent balm distilled from the beautiful plant Christianity dropped gently into her wounded heart; her pain assuaged, her spirits tranquilised by its sweet influence, she arose from her knees, and found her chamber occupied by herself alone.

Great indeed was the amazement of our heroine. The door still remained fastened upon the inside as she had left it. The trap could not have moved without its sounds, so forcibly impressed upon her recollection, awakening her attention; nor could Hero have passed through the passage to the church without disturbing her, as she knelt in such a direction as totally to prevent the departure or entrance of any one

that way unknown to her. How then could Hero have possibly disappeared? Was it friends, or was it foes who conveyed her away? Her friends must be Hero's enemies; and with them the vindictive creature would not surely have gone without resistance; *that* she must have heard. However, go by what means soever, Victoria beheld her departure as the kindness of Heaven to herself; and, devoid of apprehension from the mysterious event, she shortly after retired to bed; where, although surrounded by horrors of every denomination, she slept until morning; and more serenely sweet was her slumbers than those of the persons who (though still the free agents of their own actions) had the power to injure her; for she had no pang of conscience to disturb her sleep; and, enveloped in the pure faith of true piety, she believed herself secure.

CHAP. V.

In the morning, when Juan came to conduct Victoria from her chamber, he inquired for Hero; and, on being informed of her mysterious disappearance, he betrayed the most evident amazement; and, on preceding our heroine into the parlour (where Don Manuel, Garcias, and conte Vicenza's young companion were assembled), hastened to announce the vanishing of Hero. Although Don Manuel was visibly astonished and discomposed at the intelligence, he made no comment on it, but strove to hide his chagrin and surprise in attention to Victoria; while Garcias, more vehement in temper and less master of dissimulation, betrayed the most violent sensations of astonishment and consternation; while half sentences of mysterious import fell unguardedly from him; and it required all the address of the wary Manuel to awaken him to a sense of his impru-

dence, without further increasing the curiosity or conjectures of the stranger.

They all soon after sat down to breakfast, when Don Manuel's manners to our heroine were as on the preceding evening; while the young stranger looked upon her with increased pity and admiration. Victoria was a silent spectator of this meal. The sight of Garcias, and the sensuous assiduities of Don Manuel, ever renewed those terrors which her reliance upon Providence subdued in their absence; and the recollection of what she had already encountered in that castle, and the dreadful apprehension of what in this day she might be doomed to, made up an olio of misery for her to feed upon, and threw such a sadly interesting expression of the affliction of her mind into her wan and languid, though still lovely countenance, that Don Manuel seemed much affected; and once, after gazing pensively at her for some moments, he turned to Garcias and said something to him, but in so low a tone Victoria could not distinguish one word of it: but not so was the reply of Garcias delivered; for, striking his clinch-

ed hand against the table, he emphatically exclaimed—

"D—d pusillanimous nonsense! What! be turned to a milksop by the pitiful sorrow of a whining girl's countenance? For shame, have you not ever found vengeance sweet? Remember"—when, now perceiving Victoria was listening attentively to him, he suddenly ceased, darting a petrifying look of brutal malice at her that made her tremble. Shortly after breakfast being ended, he arose, and, sullenly desiring the young man to accompany him, departed through the glass door into the piazza.

Highly and reasonably as Victoria feared and hated Garcias, she saw his departure with the most painful emotions; as it left her totally alone with Don Manuel, who, though she now, from his late conduct towards her, firmly believed pitied her, was yet compelled to take a cruel part against her; and, in sad expectation of hearing something torturing to her feelings from him, she some time trembling sat, when at length Don Manuel broke the silent interval by a repetition of his ardent passion for her,

and an information of his fixed resolution of making her his without delay; and, as she so highly disapproved, he said, of the long established custom of affiancing adopted in the castle, he should, contrary to the approbation and wishes of his associates, have the marriage ceremony performed by a priest, who was to be admitted for that sacred purpose the succeeding morning at ten o'clock, when he trusted her own good sense and ductile disposition would prevent the necessity of resorting to any violent or disagreeable measures; and that she would graciously, before his friends and vassals, make him the happiest of mankind, by unreluctantly bestowing her hand upon him.

Victoria, subdued by horror and agitation, could not articulate a reply. She could only bow a kind of hopeless acquiescence. Well she knew that if this marriage was determined upon, her struggling against such superior power would prove ineffectual, while her appearance of submission might possibly prevent the adoption of any violence against her during the twenty-four

hours of respite now employed; and during that period she fondly hoped the goodness of Providence would intervene to save her from this dreadful fate which now threatened her.

The acquiescence of Victoria to his proposition, although too evidently a painful assent, so much amazed Don Manuel, that instead of doing what an ardent lover would have done—thank her for her kindness—he, in a tone of much astonishment, exclaimed—

"What can this mean, lady Victoria? You this morning unhesitatingly consent to honour me with your hand, whilst yesterday you preferred death to affixing your signature to our contract. Surely there must be some illusion. You have some subterfuge. Some one has dared to meditate and promise you escape from—"

Victoria now raised her eyes, filled with all the sublimated fire of virtue. "Don Manuel," she firmly said, "I *dare* to act as my principles direct me. My union with you can only lead me to misery, but not to guilt; and if it is the will of Heaven to con-

sign me to a life of wretchedness, I will patiently submit to its harsh dispensations, whilst my cheerless days can be taught fortitude by the firm hope of happiness in a world to come. But was I now to sign that contract, knowing as I do the direful pitiless crime it would be the black mandate for committing, I should become a diabolical principal in the monstrous guilt: and what balm of future bliss could still the rankling wounds of conscience? Tortures, I again affirm, shall not make me guilty; but in your power it is to make me wretched."

At the close of her last sentence Victoria's firmness forsook her, and she burst into tears.

"Heaven forbid," exclaimed Don Manuel, "that I should make such exalted virtue wretched! No, lady Victoria, no; believe me, although it may be in my power, it will never be in my inclination to afflict you;" and with the most benign and conciliating tenderness he took her handkerchief from her hand to wipe her tears himself away. At this moment the sound of near approaching footsteps struck his ears from

the piazza, and he heard the voice of Garcias: he started from Victoria's side; and had her eyes at that moment been turned upon him, she would have seen a marked and instantaneous change of expression diffuse itself over his countenance. The tenderness of sympathy gave way to a smile of rapturous triumph; and, as he met Garcias and his young companion at the door, he joyfully exclaimed—

"The angel smiles propitiously, and I am the most to be envied of mankind."

Garcias advancing, stood before Victoria, and through his heavy and bent brows fixed his penetrating ferocious eyes for some moments in an earnest gaze of doubt, surprise, and scrutiny upon her; and, as he turned away, his face displayed a smile so diabolical, so ghastly, so mysterious, that Victoria could not define it, though it made her shudder.

"Don Manuel," said the wretch with a dæmonian sneer, "I am grieved to tear you from this condescending angel by cruelly reminding you of that terrestrial vulgarism, business; but this is, alas! the moment for

your attending an appointment of the utmost consequence.

Don Manuel now bade adieu to our heroine, and with Garcias was about to leave the room, when the young man who loitered behind, evidently anxious to gain a moment's conversation with Victoria, recurred to his recollection, and suddenly he stopped.

"Conte Urbino," said he, "your uncle requires your attendance, so pray lead the way: nor can I submit to your paying your devoirs to this lady, who in some hours hence will be my bride. Go, signior, you are too young and too dangerous a rival for me not to fear you."

The young cavalier, overwhelmed with confusion, chagrin, and disappointment, departed with Don Manuel and Garcias, leaving Victoria sick at heart with misery and apprehension.

This young man then, thought our heroine, is conte di Urbino; he who is so universally esteemed for his amiable qualities. He doubtlessly compassionates my distress, and wishes to befriend me. It was

evident that he had something of moment to impart to me, and Don Manuel would not suffer him to speak to me—Don Manuel my destined husband! Oh pitying Heaven, can this be thy decree? Tears of bitterest anguish now burst from her eyes, and for some moments she sobbed convulsively. At length, while painful reflexion agonised her mind, her last interview with Don Manuel repassed in retrospection. His manner, when unrestrained by the presence of Garcias, seemed more the effusions of pity than of love; and she now felt fully convinced of what she had during the last day suspected, that he only affected to be her lover to forward the vile schemes of conte Vicenza and his vile coadjutor Garcias. She had surmised from many circumstances, even before she had so providentially found that torn part of a letter in the dungeon, that Polydore's following her to Don Manuel's castle had been part of a plan adjusted even before she had been sent from France; and Don Manuel having so openly named conte di Urbino before her, seemed as if he no longer thought it

necessary to affect ignorance of his knowledge of his new guest, whom at first it was evident they wished her to consider as a captive. And now the result of all this retrospection was, a thorough conviction that there was no real intention of uniting her to Don Manuel, but that something perhaps even more dreadful, which this measure was meant to aid in terrifying her into, awaited her on the morrow. She shuddered, she trembled, and at length asked herself, Can I do nothing to prevent the realising these anticipated horrors?

Oh yes! she suddenly thought; she was now alone, and most probably unobserved; this was then, therefore, her only opportunity of striving to obtain even one moment's conference with Sebastian, who was capable of advising her, and would interest Francisco to protect her further. She hastily approached the door of Sebastian's apartment; and as she went, she thought of her friend in the church, with whom her illness had excluded all communication, and about whom she had sustained much painful anxiety; but now firmly be-

lieving that his departure had long since taken place, she cast a wistful look towards the map, accompanied by a deep-heaved sigh and starting tear, which she hastily wiped away as she gently tapped at Sebastian's door. No answer being returned she rapped again, but still no answer.

Vexation at her disappointment inspired our heroine with the temerity to knock louder, when the only answer she received was from babbling echo repeating the sound of her knocks, which vibrated loudly along the vaulted roof of the library. Attentively she listened—all within was silent as the grave. Her painful anxiety to be heard induced her to try her voice, hoping if that reached Sebastian's ears he would recollect it, and in pity appear to her. Sebastian's name she therefore repeated several times, louder and still louder each reiteration, but still to no purpose; when, almost driven to despair by disappointment and terror for the safety of her venerable friend, she suddenly heard her own name distinctly repeated in a gentle and well-known voice. Victoria's heart almost bounded from its

seat with surprise and joy; and timidly but hastily turning her eyes to where they were so unexpectedly summoned, she beheld the chasm leading to the church open, and her but too much admired young friend, whom she had firmly believed far distant, standing within it, who eagerly beckoned her approach, and she hesitated not to comply as speedily as the agitation of her frame would admit of.

"Great and terrible has been the anxiety which I have suffered, lady Victoria, since last we met," said he, tenderly but respectfully taking her trembling hand. "I knew of your illness, of your danger, and, Oh happiness! of your recovery. Again I waited with eager solicitude and impatience here; but you forgot me, and no longer sought to meet a friend who would —but I must not waste the precious fleeting moments in telling you all my friendship would lead me to do for you, since I am happily here to inform you what I can do to serve you."

Victoria, overpowered by joy, hope, surprise, timidity, stood covered with the va-

rying blushes of sensibility, trembling and in tears, unable to articulate a single sentence.

" Compose your fluttered spirits I conjure you, dearest lady Victoria," continued the stranger in the softest tones of gentle kindness, whilst his intelligent countenance displayed the most animated interest in every thing that could affect her. " Let me entreat you to exert your fortitude to hear with firmness that the moment for your liberation draws very near I trust. All will be in readiness this very night for your escape. Be firm, I implore you, in your belief of my integrity; and when the castle clock strikes one, fearlessly venture from your chamber through the secret passage to the church. I will be at the shrine, to receive and conduct you to some other of your friends, who with myself will convey you to any place of refuge you may wish to fly to. I entreat, I conjure you, exert your mental powers until we again meet, since you will, alas! have no other support till then. Temporise with the assassins of your peace by affected submission; and, if possible, by an appearance

of composure, lead them into a belief of your having become more compliant than you have hitherto been. This will at least insure you a cessation from persecution during your continuance with them, and probably may prevent the forming of any new plan to interfere with our projected escape. Come then, cheer up dearest lady Victoria; condescend for once to deceive, and, ere morning, I trust you will be in a place of safety. And now, adieu! until the propitious hour of one: no longer dare I indulge myself by staying here; for, were I now to be discovered, fatal would be the blow given to all my schemes, to all my fondest hopes. Farewell! and may Heaven protect and support you, most amiable, most interesting of human beings!"

With a graceful and tenderly respectful bow he precipitately closed the pannel, and Victoria sunk upon the couch beneath it, her mind in a tumult of sensations that almost subdued every faculty. While her young friend had been present, she had lost the power of articulation. Soon after he was gone she recollected fifty things she

wished to say to him. She looked wistfully towards the aperture—it was indeed closed. She doubted if his momentary appearance had not been an illusion of her disturbed imagination. Reflexion convinced her he had been there, and had promised to rescue her from horror and misery that very night.

Her tears now flowed in torrents, unlike those she had long been accustomed to shed; for these were tears of joy, and, as long absent strangers, she gave them free indulgence. At length, becoming more composed, Heaven had her grateful acknowledgments for its promised kindness: and as her perturbation subsided, her reason began to operate; and fearing every thing which might lead to a discovery of her intended escape, she judged it expedient to quit the library, lest her own consciousness of what had just occurred there might by some means awaken suspicion of a something, and lead to observation, and ultimately to detection; therefore, with trembling steps and a palpitating heart, she measured her way to the eastern piazza,

where she seated herself, and was fully occupied by busy thought until dinner time, when Don Manuel himself came out to seek her and conducted her into the parlour, where conte Vicenza, his nephew, and Garcias, were already assembled—Polydore looking very pale, languid, and thoughtful, his nephew dejected beyond measure, and seeming as if he no longer dared to turn his admiring pitying eyes upon Victoria.

The spirits of our heroine were too much agitated to admit of her availing herself of the attentive hospitality of Don Manuel during the repast; but, mindful of the advice her young friend had given her, she strove to appear unembarrassed and serene; but a novice in art, she could not preserve that even degree of tranquillity indicative of a mind at ease. Nature was Victoria's guide, and the feelings she inspired could not be concealed. One moment fear and anxiety, in despite of every effort, sunk her to the lowest degree of sadness; while, in the next, hope elevated her spirits to such a pitch, that the bright emanations of joy, too powerful for disguise, would burst from

her heart in some mirthful sally of playful gaiety which charmed Don Manuel, surprised and displeased conte Vicenza, increased his nephew's dejection, and drew an expression of mysterious triumph into the diabolical countenance of Garcias.

When dinner was ended, conte Vicenza complained of being still so much of an invalid as to feel exhausted and to require rest; he therefore retired to take a siesto, accompanied by his nephew, whom he ordered to watch by him while he slept; and Don Manuel, after many tender speeches and apologies to Victoria, departed upon business, attended by Garcias. Happy in being thus relieved from society so hateful to her, our heroine resolved to avail herself of this unexpected opportunity to go to her chamber, there to make some arrangements for her promised escape. Accordingly, when she reached her chamber, she took from her baggage the parcels she had formerly made up, containing her trinkets, and deposited them in her pockets, lest, in the moment of departure, her spirits, hurried as they doubtless would be, might

occasion her leaving them behind her. A parcel with some changes of linen she concealed in her bed, as being too large to carry about her: and as Victoria carefully looked over every article her baggage contained, that she might not leave any thing portable behind her which she might afterwards regret, a length of time necessarily elapsed before she was ready to return to the parlour; and, just as she was preparing to leave her room, she, to her utter dismay, heard a hollow bound against the trap-door, and immediately after an attempt made to force back the bolts. Alarmed beyond measure, she flew to the chamber door, when her flight that way was unexpectedly prevented by the murmuring sound of voices in the lobby. Should she venture or should she not? She trembled with apprehension—she hesitated—she listened attentively, and was no longer in doubt. She distinguished the voice of Garcias, and in an instant darted through the tapestry door, which she carefully closed after her; and, without waiting to take breath or consider what she was about,

swiftly glided down the staircase, raised the step with ease, and, unannoyed by any impediment, in a few moments found herself in the church, making the best of her way to the passage into the library, which she hoped to enter unobserved, as at that hour she never remembered to have seen any of Don Manuel's people in the library.

On approaching the monument leading to the passage, Victoria looked with trembling caution around her; and, on arriving at the short dark arcade communicating with the other aisle, she suddenly stopped to inspect it, from the shelter a cluster of pillars at the corner afforded her, lest in passing the end, which she must do to reach the monument, she might be seen and discovered by some of those people the stranger warned her of. The instant she took her station among the pillars she distinctly heard the sound of retreating footsteps along the passage. The icy chill of fear thrilled through her heart. Cautiously and apprehensively she glanced her eyes along the arcade, and beheld her young friend walking slowly on, with one

arm supporting a female, of a commanding height and most graceful form, a hand of whom rested familiarly upon his shoulder.

A pang of torture never before felt by our heroine now shot through her throbbing heart—a death-like sickness assailed her—she tottered, and sunk at the foot of the pillars which concealed her, but still directing her eyes in earnest gaze upon her friend and his companion, who at length stopped, apparently in serious conference. Worlds, had she possessed them, would Victoria have given to hear the subject of their conversation, but by listening she would not for worlds obtain that gratification. Chance had conducted her to where these lovers, believing themselves unobserved, were pouring out the secrets of their hearts, and honour and generosity forbad her meanly stealing their secrets from them; and instantly she resolved to effect her retreat into the library, whilst their backs continued to her.

Trembling, Victoria arose to put her design in execution; but the moment she was about to emerge from her hiding-place she

perceived they had turned about and were slowly advancing. To escape unobserved by them was now impossible: to discover herself might involve her friend in difficulty or danger, and certainly would overwhelm his companion with confusion: to conceal herself behind the pillars still was therefore her only alternative. The gloom of the place was favourable to her intention, and she gently laid herself down amongst the pillars, scarcely allowing herself to breathe, and in a state of mind the most pitiably humiliating. Conscious of rectitude, yet still she shuddered lest her friend should discover her as he passed. In what a light must she then appear to him—a secret observer! — She sickened at the thought; but she had no longer time for anticipating fears. They approached her—her heart almost bounded from its seat, and her limbs were convulsed with tremor. They ascended the steps, and, without any intention of listening, these words struck Victoria's ears as they passed the place of her concealment, although delivered in a low and plaintive accent by the female.

" Think of the anguish that I shall suffer during your absence, still uncertain if you will ever be allowed to rescue me from hence. In the society of this too interesting, too fascinating Victoria, you will learn to forget your poor Matilda, who can know no peace till you return. Ah! what misery, what anxiety, what restless and anticipating fears shall I be doomed to suffer, while you are—Oh! happy Victoria!"——

They were now gone too far for our heroine to hear more; but she had heard sufficient to make her weep. The sound of their retreating footsteps at length no longer reaching her ears, she ventured from ambush, and with a beating melancholy heart ascended the monument and gained an uninterrupted passage into the library, where she seated herself near to the place she had emerged from, too much subdued by agitation to proceed further, or to think of any thing but what she had just heard and seen. She was grieved she scarcely knew why. Her friend had told her of his having a tender attachment, and why should she feel thus mortified and distressed

at beholding the object of it, whom she doubted not was very deserving, since she was the choice of the most amiable of mankind.—Ah! how amiable! how very very good! His dear Matilda, it appears, is not allowed to share in my escape; and yet his humanity leads him from this beloved object to rescue a helpless fellow-creature from destruction. Oh, bless him! bless him, Heaven!—and Matilda too, for is she not good and generous? for, agonising as this separation is to her, she benevolently suffers him to leave her to save me from endless misery. But she shall not, no she shall not long be left to anguish, to anxiety, and restless anticipating fears, for me; he shall place me in some convent in Roussillon, and immediately return to her, to ease her mind of every apprehension. Oh! why did she call me happy? Surely it is happy, happy Matilda, beloved by such a being. She knows that she is so.—Then how could I awaken uneasiness in her mind? What could induce her to fear me, or to call me too interesting, too fascinating?—Misfortunes may have made me

interesting, but Heaven forbid that I should fascinate him your heart is plighted to. Oh, no, no, no! I am not such a worthless wretch as to form a wish for doing so."

Victoria's head now sunk upon her hand, her elbow resting upon one arm of the couch, and, in the deepest train of melancholy reflexions, she continued quite unmindful of the approach of night or of where she was, until Don Manuel, advancing to her from the parlour, disturbed her meditation by informing her she had been sought for throughout the grounds and castle, and that he had experienced the most dreadful alarms for her safety.

"Was I sought for here, Don Manuel?" replied Victoria, endeavouring to conceal, by affected composure, the apprehension she felt lest her flight through the church had been discovered.

"No, believe me," said Don Manuel, tenderly taking her hand to lead her to the parlour; "since this is the last spot in the castle any of my people would wish to enter after the close of day; nor could I expect to find so young a female, not even

lady Victoria, enlightened as I know her matchless mind to be, alone, in the gloomy hour of approaching night, in an apartment where men of dauntless courage in the field dare not keep such vigil."

"There is something inimical then to mental as well as personal courage in this castle," replied Victoria; "for here your people, signior, have been taught to fear the dead, and I have first learned to tremble at the living. It is a sad knowledge I have gained; but Heaven avert the more dreadful one from me of fearing the shadow of a substance I had injured."

Don Manuel flung her hand from him; but ere they had proceeded many paces he took it again with gentleness. "You are an extraordinary creature," said he; "and it is well for the cause I am embarked in that our *tête-à-têtes* have not been suffered to have been more frequent."

They now reached the parlour just as conte Vicenza, his nephew, and Garcias, entered from the piazza in evident consternation. The moment Garcias beheld our heroine, he furiously demanded where she

had been skulking, and why she had given them so much trouble?

"Garcias," said Don Manuel sternly, "your zeal transports you beyond the limits of propriety. When speaking to a brother ruffian, such harsh and insolent terms may perhaps be sometimes necessary; but when addressing a lady, nothing can extenuate the omission of politeness. Lady Victoria, too justly intimidated by your savage manners, and fearing her evil destiny might lead her to encounter you, took refuge amongst the spectres of the library; and I found her sitting undismayed there, even at this hour, where *you* and *other heroes* of our community dare not for a moment remain alone."

Garcias slunk into a seat, silenced into an impenetrable gloom. Conte Vicenza appeared evidently disconcerted at this sarcasm; while Don Manuel, unmindful of their chagrin, took a chair by Victoria, and entered into conversation with her, exerting every power of his mind to entertain her; and had she been in a place of safety, with a heart at ease, and without a knowledge

of the depravity of his life and principle, she must have been highly charmed by his conversation: but although Victoria strove with all her faculties to bestow her whole attention upon what was saying, and to appear unembarrassed and in some degree cheerful, yet, as the night advanced, her spirits, fluctuating between ten thousand hopes and fears, became so tumultuous, that it was with the utmost difficulty she could conceal her agitation, or bear any connected part in conversation.

Supper-time at length arrived; and although this repast was dispatched with unusual expedition, Victoria thought an age had been devoted to it. Conte Vicenza, as each moment passed, became more restless and uneasy, his nephew more dejected, Garcias more observant, Victoria more abstracted, and Don Manuel more insinuating; not one moment did he suffer to pass in silence, eagerly starting new subjects when the old ones seemed nearly exhausted, as if he feared to trust himself with his own thoughts, which seemed every moment

softening into something of painful fond solicitude for the interesting Victoria.

At last the moment so much wished for by our heroine arrived, and Juan entered to conduct her to her chamber. In the most dreadful and obvious trepidation, she arose from her seat and almost inarticulately bade the party a good night. Her heart bounded and beat with the most tumultuous violence; her trembling limbs could scarcely perform their functions; and her colour varied with a rapidity that proclaimed at once the perturbation of her mind. Don Manuel, as usual, led her to the door, but, without his accustomed tender farewell speech, pressed her hand with energy, and precipitately left her in evident emotion, mysterious and powerful; and so alarmed was Victoria by the singularity of his conduct and by the uncertainty of her own fate, that she found herself compelled to request Juan's arm to support her.

CHAP. VI.

In all that agitation of mind and frame which hopes and fears like hers inspired, Victoria walked along unconscious whither she was going, until she found herself at the foot of the great staircase. Alarmed, she instantly stopped, and hastily demanded where Juan was leading her?

"To your chamber, donna."

"This is not the way to my chamber," said she in faltering accents expressive of her anticipating fears.

"Not to the one you lately slept in," he replied; "but thither you go no more."

Half shrieking she wildly exclaimed, "I must, I will return there!" Then clinging to the balustrade to prevent his forcing her up the staircase, she earnestly and pathetically supplicated to be allowed to pass that one night in the last chamber she had occupied; but Juan was inflexible.

It was his duty, he said, to obey Don Manuel, who had ordered him to conduct her to the chamber she first had in the castle, and there he would take her dead or alive.

Victoria now, in wild affright, fled from him; and, winged with despair, hastened back to the parlour to implore Don Manuel to grant her petition; but he was gone, and no one appeared there but Garcias. Struck with dismay, and with all the agony her mind endured depicted upon every line of her countenance, she eagerly demanded where Don Manuel was.

"Why, what can you want with him?" answered Garcias sullenly.

"I want him to pity me; to have the humanity to allow of my returning to the chamber I last night occupied, and to spare me the horrors of that dreadful chamber I first inhabited."

"What!" said the savage, with a sarcastic grin, "What! do you pretend to dread a return to that room?—*you*, who could magnanimously sit in the dusk of evening, and alone too, in the library, where

I dare not remain? Oh abominable affectation!"

"I have no cause," replied Victoria, bursting into a convulsive passion of tears, "I have no cause to fear any supernatural power; but from that room, which I tremble at passing my night in, you are no stranger, signior, to the mysterious manner in which my respected attendant was conveyed away. Oh, where is Don Manuel? in pity let me, oh! let me see him. He is not cruel—he will compassionate my misery; he will, I know, accede to my petition."

"Will he?—then I'll be d——d if you shall see him. I am cruel, or at least resolved; and to that very dreaded chamber you this instant go." Victoria, shrieking, strove to elude the ruffian's grasp, but in vain. She sunk upon her knees, and in the most pathetic terms supplicated for mercy; but the heart of Garcias was invulnerable to the attacks of pity.

"No, no," said he unfeelingly; "these counterfeited fears can avail you nothing, my lovely novice. If your old attendant was mysteriously conveyed away from one cham-

ber, you forget that your young attendant was equally so from the other; so no more of this flimsy nonsense. Besides, you who are so very sanctified, such an exemplary devotee, have no cause for fear, since your piety is an impregnable shield; and the rosy little cherubim and seraphim will certainly, if not quite negligent of their duty, in case of an emergency, fly away with you from the clutches of the profane." Then, regardless of her tears, her groans, her struggles, her supplications, her despair almost arising to phrensy, he bore her to the chamber she so much dreaded; and there leaving her with a lamp, her dismaying fears, and agonising disappointment for her companions, fastened the door after him and departed.

Victoria's feelings were now tortured up to such a pitch of anguish, that her faculties were benumbed by suffering; and she happily for some time became almost insensible of her misery. With eyes fixed, and folded arms, she sat motionless, while deep groans alone indicated her having still some recollection of her wretchedness.

At length the castle clock struck one—to our heroine a dreadful sound. It tolled the knell of her departed hope, and roused at once her almost torpid faculties to acutest feelings. Tears of the bitterest woe burst in torrents from her eyes; and the certainty of her forlorn situation struck her heart with the direst pangs of despair. At length a new agony of horror suddenly assailed her in the terrible apprehension of her intended escape having been discovered, and that her amiable generous friend would become a victim to his humanity. This was the hour appointed for her flight; and this was probably the moment in which the most benevolent of human beings might fall an unsuspecting prey to the diabolical assassins of the castle.

Images of murder, torture, and death, in every dreadful shape, now presented themselves in horrid array to her dismayed imagination, and floated in ghastly forms before her. In this moment a hollow sound of approaching footsteps struck her ears: eagerly she glanced her eyes around the room, in a hopeless search for succour, when a

lengthened, though half-stifled groan, issued from one of the beds. Her eyes rested on the spot from whence it seemed to proceed, and for the first time she perceived the small bed Hero had reposed in was occupied. With difficulty could she repress a shriek; breathless with dreadful expectation, she looked upon the object of her consternation; and conceiving by the head-dress that it was a female who rested there, she hastily advanced to the bed, with a half-formed hope of finding Teresa, when a spectacle so unlooked for, so afflicting, so appalling, struck her dismayed senses, that, uttering a piercing cry of horror, her trembling knees sunk with her to the ground; and, scarcely possessing power to retain her panic-struck faculties, she fixed her eyes in a gaze of dreadful amazement upon the bed, while she strove to breathe forth with energy a prayer for the repose of signora Octavia's soul, whose body lay on that bed disfigured with gore and ghastly wounds, clothed in a shroud and winding-sheet, all stained with the blood the murderer's hand had shed.

It was in this awful moment of terror and

dismay that the chamber door was softly opened, and conte Vicenza, armed with a sword, entered alone. With an air of compassionating tenderness he approached our woe-struck heroine, whom with the gentle words of kindness and encouragement he raised from the ground. The powers of her mind harrowed by despair, horror, and apprehension, Victoria seemed to have lost all recollection of the causes she had to fear and despise the conte; her now imperfect memory represented him to her as the husband of her aunt, the kind and indulgent protector of her innocence and youth, whom Providence had conducted to her aid in the moment of hopelessness. She attempted not to disengage herself from his support; her head rested contentedly upon his shoulder, and after some feeble efforts to speak she softly articulated, "Oh my uncle, save me, rescue me, conduct me to my aunt."

"I will my beloved, my injured child," he tenderly replied: "I came hither for that purpose; be therefore composed, be pacified, be no longer alarmed, my love,

for I will protect you from every danger." He led her to a seat, and then continued:

"By means of that disaffected follower of the miscreant Manuel, who guided my wandering way to find you in this infernal castle, I have just learned that the most diabolical plot the fiends of cruelty ever suggested is preparing to be executed against you this very night. Assisted by the contrivance of this man, and at the peril of my life, I hither came to save you. This man, Urbino, with a chosen band, are now in waiting to convey us to a secure retreat; from whence, as speedily as our safety will admit of, we shall proceed to my château, where your beloved Farinelli shall be in readiness to receive you; and I will conduct you from this soul-harrowing place the moment your spirits are sufficiently composed to enable you to encounter those difficulties which must necessarily attend our escape."

"I am composed, I am ready, I am equal to encountering every difficulty that can present itself," exclaimed Victoria, wildly starting from her chair and giving her trembling hand to Polydore, who taking

the lamp from the table supported his lovely niece to the chamber-door; but there he suddenly stopped.

"On one condition alone, Victoria, will I save you from the calamitous fate that awaits you even in the next moment," said he solemnly.

Victoria shuddered. "Name it my lord," she faintly articulated. Conte Vicenza led her back to the table, where depositing the light, he drew the contract from his bosom, and took a pen from an inkstand which lay upon the table.

"Affix your name," said he, "to this solemn promise of becoming my wife the moment I obtain permission from the see of Rome for our union."

These words, with a sight of the contract, like an electric shock, roused at once to fullest vigor Victoria's before enfeebled mental powers.

"Never! my lord," she exclaimed firmly: "no, never will I sign it, or become your wife!"

"Then will I leave you, deluded wretched girl, to the horrors of your approaching fate."

"That fate cannot entail guilt upon me; therefore I prefer it, and beg that I may be left to prepare my mind for meeting it." She waved her hand for his departure, and then intrepidly walked to the bed where Octavia's body lay, on which she gazed in silent anguish; and then, sinking upon her knees, devoutly prayed to Heaven for its support through her approaching trial.

The conte beheld her with surprise and mortification; but at length advancing to her, said, "Silly, infatuated Victoria! you know not the tortures which await you."

"The tortures of conscience shall not be amongst them," she firmly replied. "Leave me, my lord, I entreat you. You inform me my time is short; and do not you rob me of those moments for which I have such necessary, such awful employment."

"Well then, be it so," said the conte furiously; "but the moment is at hand when you will rue this rashness, when you will too late repent your injustice to me." He then rushed out of the chamber, and Victoria heard him draw the bolts which

fastened her in with the murdered body of her friend, without once wishing to recall him; and yet it was to her an awful scene. The first time in her life that she had knelt by the bed of death, enclosed with the mangled corse of her murdered friend, who was so mysteriously withdrawn from, so horribly returned to that chamber, and expecting every moment to meet with a fate similar to that Octavia had experienced, her senses sickened, but her soul remained undauntedly firm to its purpose, until another doleful groan assailed her ears.

"Gracious Providence!" Victoria exclaimed, starting from her knees, "can it be possible that she yet lives?" and with all the sanguine energy of hope she grasped one of Octavia's pallid hands, to try her pulse; but instantly she let it drop in horror! Its clay-cold, clammy, stiffening touch extinguished every ray of hope at once: and now, appalled with direful superstition, she almost formed a wish that she had been less precipitate with conte Vicenza; but in one instant that wish was recoiled from with horror.

Bernini was no more; yet twice she heard distinctly a groan of anguish burst from the bed on which her body lay. What could they portend? She listened in breathless expectation to hear them repeated; but all continued silent as the grave, until she heard the bolts of her chamber-door suddenly draw back, when conte Vicenza rushed in almost breathless with agitation.

"The blood-hounds are approaching," exclaimed he, advancing to the spot where Victoria trembling stood: "in a moment more they will be here; and ill as you have used me, I risk my life to save you; for by Heaven you shall not become a prey to your own deluding obstinacy! I will, insulting, suspicious, inexorable girl, in despite of your d——d, d——d prejudices, save you from destruction! This instant shall you sign the contract and accompany me, or I will myself become your assassin, and spare you the horrible fate preparing for you." Then seizing her in his arms, he dragged the struggling shrieking Victoria to the table, to compel her to sign the contract, which she resolutely exclaimed

against doing; when, by the interposition of pitying Heaven, she was rescued from his grasp by strength more powerful than his own.

Victoria, turning to see by whose intervention she was withdrawn from conte Vicenza's power, beheld Hippolyto! Now shrieking with joy she sunk upon her knees and breathed a fervent thanksgiving to Heaven, while the conte, with phrensy strongly marked upon his countenance, rushed frantically with his unsheathed sword upon Hippolyto, exclaiming—

"Villain! miscreant! take my vengeance!"

Hippolyto was also armed, and parried off the furious attacks of Polydore. "I owe conte Vicenza much," he replied; "but this is not a moment for retribution. In lady Victoria's presence I only act upon the defensive, unless compelled to other conduct for her preservation."

Victoria now starting from her knees, flew to the door to call for succour; but there recollection coming to her aid, she was struck with the conviction that to

summon assistance would be for the conte's safety and Hippolyto's destruction: she therefore flew back, intending to place herself between their swords, when Hippolyto disarmed the conte, who, in the blindness of his fury striving to regain his own weapon, rushed impetuously upon the point of Hippolyto's, and received from it a deep wound in his breast; when, execrating fate and his adversary, he fell, and, in his fall overturning the table, extinguished the lamp.

Hippolyto, now mindful only of Victoria's safety, took her in his arms, and carefully steering clear from every annoyance, swiftly conveyed her behind the state bed, where upon pressing his foot against a pannel it instantly receded, when leaping through the chasm with his lovely burden, he alighted upon the summit of a narrow deplorable flight of brick steps. Cautiously he fastened the pannel with several rusty bolts, and then, guided by the glimmering of a light proceeding from below, he quickly descended with his lovely charge, who, overpowered by joy, surprise, and apprehension, found herself incapable of uttering one sen-

tence of that gratitude to her gallant deliverer which her heart was full of.

The beaming light now brightening at each step they took over mouldering bricks and heaps of rubbish, Victoria at length beheld a man standing at the foot of this long flight of steps holding the torch by which they benefited, who on first catching a glimpse of them as they descended, rapidly advanced to meet them, and discovered to our astonished heroine the humane Pedro.

Finding another of her friends escaped from what she had believed to be a general massacre, could not but inspire the grateful heart of Victoria with the purest joy, and tears of genuine pleasure burst from her eyes, restoring at once her powers of articulation; and she would have breathed forth some of those acknowledgments her heart was full of, but Hippolyto gently imposed silence as necessary to their safety.

Preceded now by Pedro with the torch, they begun a dangerous descent of a long cylindrical staircase, even more out of repair than the flight of brick steps; and it

required the most wary circumspection to reach the bottom in safety, which they at length effected, and entered a narrow winding damp passage of considerable length; and as they reached its termination, Pedro desiring Victoria not to be alarmed at the sight of her friends, they suddenly entered a frightful cavern, where several men were waiting, all armed with carabines, and from whom Hippolyto demanded if all was ready.

Thomas now stepped forward, with heart-felt glee depicted upon his honest weather-beaten countenance, and with genuine simplicity spoke the joy he felt at seeing Victoria in safety, while the other men answered Hippolyto's question in the affirmative; they therefore now hastened to extinguish all the lights, except what two dark lanterns contained, the feeble rays of which were alone to guide them through the intricate passes of the rocks to the sea-coast. The men now taking up their arms, they all issued from the cavern, some preceding, others following Hippolyto, who led or rather bore our trembling he-

roine along a shelving and dangerous path through some of the most rugged parts of the rocks.

The night was impenetrably dark; but there came a refreshing breeze from the sea, that, with the gentle assiduities of Hippolyto, helped to sustain the almost expiring spirits of Victoria, who feared no danger from the path, so overpowered was she by the apprehension of a pursuit; and every new projection of rock she could indistinctly see, she conjured up into the form of Garcias: and her heart almost bounded from its seat with dismay, when, by a sudden turning in the path, she found herself close to the beating surges of the sea, on which was tossed a boat that a couple of men were in, lying-to upon their oars, whom she instantly conceived to be Garcias and Juan, and she doubted not the sea-coast was encompassed by their creatures: but soon were her wild chimæras put to flight, by Thomas calling in friendly terms to the men to row in to shore, which they instantly did, and Victoria was seated in the boat between Hippolyto and Pedro. The rest of

the men followed; and, arranging themselves in proper order, they swiftly rowed off to a brigantine which lay at a small distance from shore, the side of which was instantly manned from the brigantine's boat, and Victoria carefully conducted to a chair upon the deck; where, looking around her, and perceiving the rapidity and dexterity with which the mariners were preparing to put to sea, she for the first time believed her escape certain; and, subdued by joy and gratitude to Heaven and her deliverers, she burst into a flood of tears, which relieved her full heart, and which Hippolyto and Pedro attempted not to restrain.

CHAP. VII.

Every thing having been prepared for a precipitate departure, and as all was now conducted with cleverness and activity, the brigantine soon was under weigh. The waning moon now arising, glimmered its pale light just sufficiently to show the receding rocks which enveloped the castle to Victoria, who, wrapped in a watch-coat, sat upon deck with Pedro and Hippolyto, who both endeavoured, by the strongest assurances of their faith and honour, to dispel those apprehensions and agitations she was evidently struggling with.

Of their truth and honour she had no cause to doubt; but, without the society of any other female to inspire her with confidence, she had embarked upon an element hitherto unknown to her, under the protection of men who were almost strangers, who for humanity's sake alone had under-

taken the dangerous enterprise of rescuing her from destruction, who might be very possibly betrayed by their companions, or pursued from the castle: but even if successful, where would they have it in their power to place her secure from the machinations of conte Vicenza? At length Hippolyto terminated this last uncertainty by desiring to know what port of France she wished them to make for, as being nearest to those friends she meant to put herself under the protection of.

"Alas!" she replied, "I have now no friends in France to whose protection I can safely fly; and my brother is unfortunately with his regiment at Cadiz."

Hippolyto instantly asked the pilot if it was possible to steer for Cadiz?

The wind was against them, and in so long a passage the pilot feared they might encounter some of Don Manuel's cruisers.

Victoria sighed, but acquiesced in the propriety of adhering to the original design of making for some port of France; where on landing she resolved instantly to place herself in a convent, to inform her brother

of her forlorn situation, and inquire from signora Farinelli's friends in Tuscany where to find her.

It was now fully determined that they should steer for Toulon, to illude pursuers who would naturally seek them in nearer ports: and this point being finally settled, they made way with tolerable rapidity for several leagues, during which time Victoria had been removed by the vigilant care of Hippolyto to the little cabin, which afforded but few comforts save shelter from the cold breath of night, and where our heroine, to divert her anxious thoughts, requested to know from Pedro and Hippolyto how they had been spared from what she had conceived to be a general massacre? by what means they had escaped from their dungeons, and been guided to her rescue in the moment when hope itself was just forsaking her?

"What you, donna, believed a massacre," said Pedro, "was in fact a circumstance still more cruel. It was the daily sport of Garcias torturing the wretched victims who

have fallen under his displeasure. As to ourselves, donna, Francisco opened our dungeons, planned the means of your escape, and directed us where to find you."

"May every power that loves the compassionate and brave," exclaimed Victoria, "recompense him, and you, my other generous protectors! you, who after suffering imprisonment, indignity, and cruel severities upon my account, have thus hazarded even life itself to rescue me from destruction. To Francisco, and every one engaged in this benevolent enterprise, heavy is indeed my debt of gratitude; but to you, signior Hippolyto, who have twice ventured——"

"Cease, lady Victoria, I conjure you cease the effusions of your grateful heart, which lead you on to magnify the little service I have been to you," said Hippolyto, eagerly interrupting her. "The time may come when lady Victoria will find she owes me less than she imagines; when it will be discovered to her how interested have been the motives of my conduct: and until that

period arrives, the highest recompense I desire is to see her mind at ease, and to behold her in a place of safety."

Victoria could make no reply. There was a solemn dignified respect in his manner, that awed into silence every suggestion of his being presumptuous; but, for the second time, he perplexed, distressed, and startled her. Covered with blushes she bent her eyes to the ground, and after a thoughtful and timid pause she ventured to relieve her embarrassment by inquiring if they could give her any information relative to Sebastian, Diego, and Teresa?

Of Diego they knew nothing; Pedro had been arrested in his (Diego's) chamber the night of Don Manuel's last return to the castle, and had never heard of Diego since: but Hippolyto informed her that Teresa was safe under Francisco's protection, and Sebastian well, and preparing to set out to Rome upon business of importance.

Victoria was charmed, was delighted, to hear of Sebastian's emancipation from cap-

tivity, which this intended expedition seemed unequivocally to imply. Teresa's safety gave her infinite pleasure; but, deeply sighing, she wished, she said, that she knew something of Diego's fate, and of——Suddenly she ceased, whilst conscious blushes overspread her cheeks.

Hippolyto, attentive only to her, caught alarm from her too apparent confusion, and eagerly asked "Who else was so happy, so honoured by lady Victoria's flattering anxiety for their safety?"

Victoria was dreadfully embarrassed; her confusion and perturbation increased; tears started to her eyes, and several times she essayed to articulate, but without success; until, at length, her ardent wish to learn if possible whether her horrid apprehensions were too fatally just conquering every obstacle, she faintly said—

"I know not if I do right in mentioning him, even to you: but it is a stranger, a gentleman whom I accidentally met during my captivity, who, taught by humanity to pity my sufferings, promised to effect my escape. Even on this very night his project

may have been discovered. I have reason to think it has; and, oh, horror most direful! his life exposed to danger from the sanguinary bravos of the castle." At this shocking idea, Victoria's voice fell to a cadence of woe so piteous, she trembled to such excess, and seemed so subdued by anticipating terror and distress, that Hippolyto, trembling almost as much as she did, attempted to present her with a glass of water; which he could scarcely hold, so great was his agitation, and which he was at last obliged to resign to Pedro, who expressed much astonishment at this anecdote relative to a stranger whom he had never before heard of, and therefore could not lull Victoria's but too evident apprehensions; while Hippolyto, after several struggles to conceal his very visible emotion, hesitatingly stammered out—

"Of that stranger, lady Victoria, I can—" suddenly he ceased, sunk into a chair, and, leaning his elbow upon a table, covered his face with both hands as if to hide the expression of his countenance from observa-

tion, sighed heavily, and, after a few moments starting from his seat, took several turns up and down the little cabin, as if irresolute, or that his bosom laboured with some powerful secret.

Victoria's fears caught such an increase of alarm from Hippolyto's conduct, that, her feelings breaking through all restraint, she exclaimed, in a tone of piercing anguish—"For the love of the Holy Virgin, speak, Hippolyto! nor thus torture me by fears too terrible to bear." Then inexpressibly shocked at her want of self-command, and still shrinking with her apprehensions, she burst into tears, and, striving to apologise for the excess of her anxiety, tremulously articulated—"You certainly, signior Hippolyto, know something dreadful relative to this stranger; and I should be a wretch, unworthy the compassionating friends I have met with, could I bear with insensibility any well-grounded fear of calamity having befallen him who pitied me, and would have served me."

The conflict in Hippolyto's mind seemed

by this time over; he approached Victoria in much distress at his conduct having augmented her alarms—" Be convinced, lady Victoria," said he, " that he whom your gratitude and benevolence thus interests you for has not fallen into the power of Don Manuel, or any of his people; nor could the smallest suspicion have been entertained of your intended flight with him. Your chamber was merely changed to further the vile schemes of conte Vicenza. That extraordinary and mysterious being, Francisco, this morning appointed that stranger to be your conductor from Don Manuel's castle; then, wishing still to be more ambiguous, in the evening delegated that happiness to me, but under the most solemn restrictions of what I may, and what I must not, communicate to you. But a period is fixed by him for the termination of this mystery; and when the painful interdict is removed, lady Victoria, believe me you will have much to hear; and in the intermediate time be satisfied that all those you have known in Don Manuel's castle,

who are honoured by your good wishes, are protected by those whom the iniquitous associates must submit to."

Victoria's mind was tranquillised by this intelligence; and she could not but feel convinced of its being a fortunate circumstance for her peace that this too interesting stranger had not been allowed to be the companion of her escape.—In this moment a sudden squall of wind arose; at the same instant a crash was heard, and a shock received; and, as if in consequence, a loud uproar upon deck succeeded.

Hippolyto, desiring Pedro to remain with Victoria, hastened aloft to learn the cause of the commotion. He staid away for some minutes, during which the gusts of wind were repeated; and when he returned he entreated our heroine to disband her fears, since all danger was happily over.

"Upon account of the almost dead calm," continued he, "we had crowded too many sails, and a sudden squall arising carried off some of our rigging that was not in a very perfect condition. But our ingenious mari-

ners have repaired the injury, and we are, it seems, in a better state than we were before this accident. However, lady Victoria, I must remind you of the caprice of those elements to which fate has at present consigned you ; and should this prove a squally or tempestuous night, as some of our seamen portend, I doubt not, from the fortitude you have upon many late, and, I trust, more serious occasions evinced, that you will not suffer much from alarm, particularly as the seamen on board are all experienced hands, who assure me that our vessel is fully equal to weathering a much more formidable gale than that we are threatened with."

Victoria promised to exert all her heroism if necessary, and soon this promise was exacted from her. The wind speedily increased with augmenting violence, and it required all the efforts of every hand on board to save the vessel, which was borne to the leeward, far from the port they wished to make.

Victoria, as she had promised, repressed

every appearance of alarm; but during the whole night, through which the tempest continued, she experienced the most kind and soothing attention from the humane Pedro, who chiefly remained with her, as the strength, activity, and cleverness of Hippolyto, though unskilled in maritime knowledge, made him of such essential service to the seamen, that they would scarcely allow him to absent himself one moment from deck to go and see how his lovely charge bore the horrors of the storm; and to whom, in the presence of Pedro, his manners were marked by the tender solicitude a fond and anxious brother would evince in a similar situation. But the moment he found himself alone with her, his deportment instantly changed to the attentive, respectful distance of an inferior; a delicacy and propriety of conduct that was not lost upon Victoria, who each moment found her gratitude to, and admiration of, Hippolyto fast increasing; and she almost looked up to him with an awful reverence, as a being far superior to the rest of human kind.

At length the tempest subsided as suddenly as it had commenced, and Aurora, when ushering in the morning, struck the before jarring elements motionless with the beautiful serenitude of her aspect, and presented our adventurers with the flattering hope of soon reaching some friendly harbour. The port of Toulon was still much nearer than Leghorn, though far they had been driven eastward: yet Hippolyto strongly advised their steering for the latter; since now, having been so long at sea, they might, in making back for Toulon, fall in with those who now had full time to be sent, and who probably were in quest of them.

This advice was too reasonable for rejection; but the day seemed determinately inauspicious to their making towards the haven of any of their wishes. The Mediterranean sea appeared as one plate of looking-glass, and the whole face of nature was hushed into an awful calm; and notwithstanding the united efforts of the indefatigable mariners, who ardently longed to ride in a safe harbour, they gained little by

their tacking, but remained for several hours almost stationary; during which time Victoria left her little cabin, where, after the storm had subsided, she obtained a refreshing and tranquil slumber; and when she revisited the deck, she partook of the best food the brigantine afforded, which was not very choice, as anxious only for escape they bestowed not their thoughts upon refreshments of a superior kind. But they were now out of Don Manuel's castle, and Victoria had appetite to eat some of the homely food, which she thought delicious when presented to her by Hippolyto, who seemed every moment to possess more and more—from her increasing admiration of his virtues and his manners—the power of making all she met with, if he was near, appear to her in the most pleasing point of view.

As evening approached, a gentle breeze sprung up, propitious to the pilot's wishes, who, being a native of Toulon, secretly wished to make for that port, and therefore now started innumerable objections to their

steering for Leghorn, with the wind unfavourable, and the hands on board nearly exhausted from the exertions of the preceding night; and Hippolyto, although apprehensive of the dangers they must be exposed to, was unwillingly compelled to acquiesce.

CHAP. VIII.

The sails again were filled, and fluttered in the wind; the sea and seamen were once more in motion, and the vessel making considerable way. Hippolyto, employed by the mariners, was no longer by Victoria's side to beguile, by his fascinating conversation, the inconveniences of an ill-provided voyage; and beginning to perceive the effect of a thick haze that was coming on, Victoria took the advice of Pedro, and retired to the cabin; whither he accompanied her, and, with a view of amusing her, sketched a slight outline of his own history.

"My father," said he, "was a respectable but unfortunate merchant at Carthagena, where he failed, and shortly after died, leaving my widowed mother with seven small children (myself the eldest), with a pittance so scanty, that she could with difficulty educate and maintain us, and appren-

tice her boys out as fast as we attained a proper age for it. I was placed with an eminent surgeon; and during my apprenticeship I formed an attachment for an amiable and lovely young woman in the neighbourhood, but whom, being poor as myself, I loved in secret, resolving that, unless fortune should smile upon me, I would never strive to inspire her with a mutual flame, since to plunge her into all the difficulties attending wedded poverty would not be to evince a true affection for her.

"By the interest of my father's friends I was appointed surgeon to a Spanish regiment then stationed in the West Indies; and the moment I was out of my time I embarked to join my regiment at Hispaniola. For seven years I continued abroad; during which I visited various climes, and was so successful in my profession, experience affording me knowledge which my years must have else denied me, that, crowned with fame and riches, I returned to my native country at the age of twenty-six, when I had the inexpressible happiness of finding my long-loved Isabella unmarried; who fall-

ing senseless into her mother's arms at unexpectedly beholding me, I flattered myself that I was not disregarded by her. I was not deceived. I proved a successful wooer, we were speedily united, and for one year I was one of the happiest of mankind.

"I had abroad acquired sufficient wealth for my Isabella and myself, without further practice in my profession; but my family wanted assistance. I placed them all in comfort, and continued my profession, from which I derived almost incredible advantages. I just wanted a few weeks of being one year the happy husband of my Isabella, when, returning from a village in the neighbourhood of Carthagena, where I had been to a patient, I, in a wood through which my road lay, discovered a respectable-looking man extended upon the ground apparently lifeless; but, upon examination, found he yet breathed, though his skull was fractured, and his body severely bruised and wounded in many dangerous places. I had him as quickly as possible conveyed to a lodging approximate to my house, and attended him with such unremitting care and success,

that in a few weeks I made a complete cure.

" He appeared to me an intelligent, respectable man, who, although a little rough in his manners, was by no means insensible to my kindness. He informed me that he was a native of Messina, and was master of a merchantman, which traded in the Mediterranean, and had now brought a rich freight to Carthagena; that having gone out to ride, to view the surrounding country, he had lost his way, and, with his mule, had fallen from a high precipice, at the foot of which I found him; and indeed many people I found at Carthagena knew him as a merchant, who occasionally traded to the port of St. Barbara. When I judged him able to venture out, I had him to dine every day at my house, where he was a witness of my domestic happiness; and when sufficiently recovered to quit Carthagena, he presented some valuable jewels to my Isabella as tokens of gratitude to us both:—but little did I imagine how soon the gem of peace was to be wrested from me in return.

" About this period I was sent for to the

superior of a neighbouring monastery, whose case had been universally pronounced hopeless. He was the idol of all the devotees in that part of Murcia, and I was promised an immense reward if I restored him to health. I had a favourite sister who was addressed by a worthy, although not affluent, young man, a relation of my Isabella's; and I resolved to give my sister a marriage portion that should make her and her lover comfortable in life, if I accomplished the superior's cure. I was so fortunate as to prove successful; I received the reward, and portioned off my sister. On the evening of this union, when all around me was happy, and innocent mirth reigning, a country lad arrived half breathless at my house to implore my immediately going to the relief of his poor father, who was just seized with a paralytic stroke. It was well known that the calls of humanity were those first attended by me. I therefore instantly accompanied the lad into the suburbs of the town, where, he said, his father lived. I entered with him an humble habitation, and was instantly surrounded by ruffians, who

gagged, bound, and placed me in a carriage which moved rapidly away.

"I will not fatigue you, donna, by relating the dreadful horrors which agonised my mind, since you, alas! can now better conceive than I describe them. From the carriage I was conveyed into a ship, where I was fastened down in the hold, and passed my time miserable as despair could make it. At length we came to an anchor; I was blindfolded, conveyed some length of way in a boat, and afterwards supported by men along a rugged path upon terra firma. In short, from the moment I was taken out of the ship, I was not suffered to behold any thing until the bandage was taken off my eyes in Don Manuel's parlour, where Don Manuel then was, with the wretch whom I had rescued from death. Scarcely need I now tell you, donna, that wretch was Garcias, who presented me to Don Manuel, with these never to be forgotten words:

"'This is the skilful surgeon to whom I owe my life; and I am happy in having pro-

cured such a valuable acquisition for you, signior.'

" Language can convey no adequate idea of my sensations, or the horrors I endured when the certainty of the calamity of my fate unfolded itself. It is now eight years since I beheld or heard of my Isabella, or my family; during which period of misery I have ever done my duty in my profession, and still looking forward to the goodness of Providence, which I doubted not, in its own time, would permit my escaping from my dreadful captivity. You cannot——"

Pedro was here dreadfully interrupted by a shout of alarm from aloft; and immediately after Hippolyto appeared in the cabin with a countenance expressive of horror and dismay, which fortitude in vain struggled to conceal. He spoke a few words in a low voice to Pedro, who, turning pale as death, staggered to the seat the shout had called him from. Hippolyto, now advancing to Victoria, took her hand in trepidation, and with a broken voice and a look of anxiety for her safety—of more than

anxiety, of anguish that shook his very soul—

" Cruel fate, I fear, lady Victoria," said he, " has not yet done persecuting you, and there will, alas! ere long, be new demands upon your unexampled fortitude."

" We are pursued!" cried she in the piercing tone of deep despair: " we are pursued, and my friends will fall victims to their humanity."

" 'Tis true," replied Hippolyto, " that a vessel is in chase of us, which, from the thick fog, and having no glasses, we perceived not until too late. It may be an Algerine corsair; it may prove our persecutors. Be who it will, we shall not tamely surrender; and I must leave you, to go and assist my brave companions in defence of that treasure which a deprivation of my life or liberty shall alone wrest from me."

Words cannot pourtray the situation of Victoria's mind at that moment. In anguish and despair she looked upon Hippolyto; when gratitude painting in her agitated breast her obligations to him in much more glowing colours than her own personal dan-

ger, she suddenly darted by him out of the cabin. But ere she reached the deck, as she intended, Hippolyto overtook her, and, catching her by the hand, demanded, in breathless amazement, whither she was going?

"It is me they seek," cried she in a tone of animated firmness; "I will deliver myself into their hands, to save Hippolyto and my other friends."

"Angelic, generous Victoria!" said he, affected almost to tears, "they seek us all, and you are the last victim they shall find." Then, tenderly clasping her in his arms, he, in despite of her struggles, bore her back to the cabin.

"Take care of, support this angelic being, Pedro," cried he; "and as you value your eternal peace, suffer her not upon deck, where the generosity of her feelings would transport her to precipitate herself into destruction, with the delusive hope of saving us her friends."

Victoria sobbed convulsively as she sunk into a chair. Hippolyto, rapidly advancing to Pedro, continued—"Take care of her,

comfort her, if you love me, Pedro; and should your professional exertions be requisite for any of our brave companions, I doubt not but lady Victoria's humanity will lead her to assist you." Then turning to her, he hastily took her hand, which he pressed to his heart—to his lips.

"Pray for our success," said he, "most pure, most exalted of human beings!" He gazed on her for a moment with looks of agonising tenderness and despair; then, as if fearing to trust himself longer there, he darted out of the cabin; when Pedro, with a countenance of hopeless sorrow, began, with a sad heart and trembling hand, to make horrid preparations to assist the wounded, while Victoria devoutly raised her heart and hands in earnest prayers for deliverance.

The tumult upon deck, which had never ceased since the first alarm, now rapidly increased, and soon all the horrors of a sea-fight commenced. The superiority of valour, with desperation added to it, was manifestly upon one side; whilst upon the other was that of treble numbers of men and guns.

The din and shock of the ordnance became so powerful, that they sunk our heroine upon her knees, where she fervently implored divine succour, until summoned by Pedro to assist him in dressing the wounds of a seaman who was just brought to him. She sickened at the task, but it was assigned her by gratitude and humanity, and she roused every faculty to perform it as she ought.

The wounded man gave hopes of victory. The intrepid valour of Hippolyto, who was fighting like a lion, he said, would insure it. Exultation and fear bounded through Victoria's heart on this intelligence; but the latter soon reigned solely there. To be foremost in fight was to be first in danger; and although she would have been mortified and disappointed had Hippolyto acted otherwise, her heart sickened at what her reason approved, and, pale, faint, and trembling, she could scarcely perform her task. In a moment more another man was borne down, his arm dreadfully shattered by a splinter. This was a horrid demand upon Victoria's humanity; yet, painful

as the effort was, she hesitated not to comply with it.

"This is a shocking wound, my poor friend," said she tremulously, as she was, by the direction of Pedro, washing the arm.

"Ah!" replied the man, "but it does not pain me half so much as the one our brave young champion has received does: but, unmindful of it, on he fights like a hero, although the whole fury of the enemy is levelled at him."

"What! is it Hippolyto you mean? Is Hippolyto wounded?" Victoria in alarm demanded.

"Yes, donna." (The spunge fell from her hand.) "Yes, and they vow to put him to the most torturing kind of death, if he does not instantly deliver you, signora, up to them."

Victoria waited to hear no further, and was upon deck before Pedro was aware of her meditating such a rash design; and through firing, smoke, and all the horrors and confusion of battle, she made her way to Hippolyto, whose left arm was bleeding copiously, and who was surrounded by a

party of ruffians who had just boarded the brigantine, and rushing into the midst of the clashing hangers—

"I am here!" she wildly cried; "I am here! then spare, oh spare Hippolyto, and let me be the only victim to your insatiate cruelty!" Then grasping the hand of a ruffian which held a sword uplifted to fall with mortal vengeance upon Hippolyto, she sunk, overpowered by her feelings and her exertions, in a swoon into the arms of Garcias.

In the first dawn of returning perception our heroine found herself laid in a birth in a much larger and better cabin than that she had lately occupied; and she also perceived that two strange men were busily employed administering restoratives to her; by these circumstances being convinced she was no longer with her friends, her senses fled again for some moments, and on her second recovery she observed Garcias with the other men. On sight of this diabolical being, the keenest sensibility of her desperate fate assailed her, and convulsive sobs and groans broke from her bosom,

which seemed, as they heaved, to rend her bursting heart; while Garcias, with that ferine cruelty he was no stranger to, bantered her upon the failure of her and her wise confederates' scheme for liberty; and jeeringly condoled with her upon the loss she had just sustained in being deprived of her ebony champion.

"Detestable, barbarous fiend!" exclaimed Victoria in a voice rendered almost inarticulate by agitation, "Have you then murdered Hippolyto?"

"Not yet," replied the savage. "Safe in custody the hero now is, smarting from innumerable wounds; but the day he is to suffer the punishment due to his enormous crime and temerity we have deferred until our return to the castle, when you will be sufficiently recovered to be a spectator of our ample vengeance."

Victoria, now uttering a deep groan, became again insensible to her wretchedness, which insensibility continued a considerable length of time; and when her senses were once more restored to perception, so complete was her misery, that de-

spair seized upon her tortured heart; and that dreadful kind of torpor it sometimes inspires influenced all her faculties. Wan, languid, and sadly woeful was her lovely countenance; whilst her sunken eyes sometimes wildly wandered, or were intently fixed, unconscious of the object they seemed wistfully to fasten on. Her bosom still heaved keen agonising sighs; but she remained ignorant of every transaction around her. Imperceptible to Victoria was now the evening's close, the lighting a lamp in the cabin, or the departure of Garcias and his two companions, who, believing her perfectly composed, retired to take food and rest after the toils of battle.

CHAP. IX.

In this state of almost utter insensibility Victoria continued until about midnight, when she was aroused to perception by hearing her own name several times softly repeated in a voice that at once awakened her shattered faculties to superstitious horror. With difficulty, from excessive tremor, she raised herself upon her elbow to learn from whence the voice proceeded; when, observing the figure of a man standing at a respectful distance, she shuddering exclaimed—

"The shade of poor Diego come to warn me of my fate!"

"Come to save you from a dreadful one," said he, gently approaching. "Dare lady Victoria venture with me upon a bold enterprise?"

She took his hand, and with difficulty suppressed a scream of joy. "It is Diego's self!—Merciful Heaven, I thank thee!"

" Dare you venture with me through that window, lady Victoria? There is a boat lying-to beneath it to receive us, and convey you to a place of safety; but we must be speedy."

Victoria attempted to rise, then suddenly stopped. " Will my doing so expose Hippolyto and his brave companions to greater evils?" said she.

" No, lady Victoria, it will extricate them from every threatened danger, since it is to them I will convey you; and with them, I trust, we shall escape from your ruthless persecutors."

Joy and hope darted a renovation of spirit, health, strength, and activity, through Victoria's mind and frame. Assisted by Diego she bounded from her birth, and without noise or difficulty followed him through one of the cabin windows, and from the stern gallery easily descended into a boat, where another man was, who, to her great satisfaction, she quickly discovered to be Thomas; but, observing they wished for silence, she forbore to ask any of those questions she panted to have answered.

Cautiously, but rapidly, they plied their oars, and in a few moments she found herself close to the brigantine she had left the castle in. Instantly she was hoisted upon deck, where she was received by Pedro and several of the seamen with every demonstration of pleasure. She was placed by them in a chair upon the deck, when the feelings of joy and gratitude which agitated her susceptible heart forced tears in torrents from her eyes.

All was instantly in commotion; the sails were soon unfurled, and in a few moments more the vessel was making considerable way. Victoria looked anxiously around; but not perceiving the object of her solicitude, at length asked Pedro where and how Hippolyto was.

"The wound in his arm," Pedro replied, "is of little consequence; but he has suffered so much mental anguish on your account, that I would not permit the generous brave Diego's gallant achievement and anxious enterprise relative to you to be mentioned to him, so fearful was I of raising a hope that might be cruelly dis-

appointed: but Diego has happily completed his daring and glorious project, and I will no longer delay giving joy and liberty to the gallant Hippolyto, who was fettered in the cabin, whilst all the rest of us were stowed and ironed in the hold."

Pedro now disappeared, and in a moment after Hippolyto was at the feet of our heroine: but joy and amazement had deprived him of the power of utterance, and he panted for words to speak his raptures. Victoria sweetly expressed her pleasure at their thus happily meeting, and tenderly deplored the wound he had received, which now confined his left arm in a sling. The sound of her voice, which he for some hours thought would never more charm his ear, increased his transports, but not his power of articulation; and almost subdued by the poignancy of his feelings, he leaned his head against the seat occupied by Victoria, who, alarmed at his situation, requested Pedro to give him something to compose his agitation. Pedro complied; and, with a view of giving time to Hippolyto's mind to recover its native tone,

requested Diego to inform them how he had contrived and managed the perilous and glorious attempt of liberating them.

" I have nothing to relate, signior Pedro," Diego modestly replied, " but that I am happy in finding Heaven has kindly deigned to prosper the first effort of virtue in a repentant sinner."

" My good Diego," said Victoria with that fascinating sweetness of voice and manners peculiar to her, " you will not, I am persuaded, refuse to gratify my eager wish of learning by what miracle you, who so short a period since was confined by illness to your bed, got into that ship your humanity and friendship have just released me from?"

" Your wishes, lady Victoria," he replied, respectfully bowing, " are commands to me which I shall ever willingly obey; and in my little narrative lady Victoria will please to remember that she is the daughter of my dear lamented lord, to whose memory I owe a debt of gratitude that with my life I would freely pay: that I, wretch as I

am, assisted to involve her, the child of my benefactor, in her—— "

" Diego, on to your narrative: no further preface I beseech you. If ever you loved my father, distress not his child by such reflexions upon a friend he regarded."

" Loved your father! Ah, lady Victoria! —But your command is that I should hasten to my narrative, and I obey.

" In a very short time after the unexpected arrest of signior Pedro in my chamber, my bed was surrounded by Don Manuel and several of my comrades. My master commanded me to silence, while his attendants, seizing my bedding, conveyed me, as I lay in it, out of the castle into that vessel we have just quitted, where I was commodiously placed in one of the best births. Don Manuel himself accompanied us; and, in spite of the interdict, I broke silence, to plead for my dear suffering lady, when Don Manuel bade me ' not fear for her, since for worlds he would not injure her; but his word was given to a friend, to assist in urging her into a measure that would ulti-

mately redound to her advantage.' He further added, 'that he had me removed from the castle to be out of the way of interfering, as he learned from Alonzo I was likely to do, and also to be out of the way of those who might injure me for that interference.'

"All the medicines which signior Pedro had prepared for me were taken with me; and one of my comrades, Felix, was ordered by my master to take care of and attend me; and when Don Manuel bade me good night, he desired me not to fear for lady Victoria or myself, since he would protect both from every real evil: and grieved to the soul was I that I could not esteem the man who was kind to me.

"Felix continued with me, and paid me every possible attention; and as my dreadful alarms upon my lady's account had been allayed by Don Manuel's solemn assurances—who, although so criminal in many instances, I never knew to forfeit his word—the violence of my indisposition almost immediately subsided; and by morning, although weak and dejected, I was

able to leave my birth and take my station upon the main-mast head, with my eyes invariably fixed upon the castle terrace, in hopes of catching a glimpse of lady Victoria, that I might be convinced of her safety: but I saw her not; and the only comfort I had was in teaching Felix to pity her.

"It is unnecessary for me to tell all the inquietude of uncertainty I experienced: and it is impossible for me to describe my feelings when, in the middle of the night before last, the bark I was in was suddenly manned and put to sea in quest of my poor lady. I supposed, in the general hurry and confusion, that my being in that vessel was forgotten, as I considered it strange policy to take a known well-wisher to the fugitives in chace of them; and I looked upon the circumstance as an auspicious omen, and thanked Providence for it. I was not mistaken in my conjecture.—But when Garcias found I was on board, he seemed more pleased than otherwise; for my being an avowed enemy of Alonzo's recommended me to his favour; and, by a

strange infatuation, he believed that I had opposed Alonzo's vile attempt solely to do my duty by Don Manuel.

As I knew not who beside signior Hippolyto were the companions of my lady's flight, I could form no conjecture of what port you were likely to make for; and every knot we advanced appalled my heart, lest we should be gaining upon you, which we were but too likely to do if we were in the same course, as the caravel we were in was by far the swiftest sailer in Don Manuel's possession. At length the gale arose, and, as I am considered to have some share of maritime knowledge, Garcias found full employment for me; but perhaps you will scarcely credit me, when I say that I did not exert myself so much as I might have done, hoping that our distress would at least gain time for you.

" The calm succeeded, and I vainly hoped that, as you had sailed an hour or two before us, you had, notwithstanding the superior swiftness of our vessel, got so far a-head as to be out of our reach; but in that I was fatally deceived. I cannot

describe the agony, the distraction of my mind during the engagement. Every gun we fired shot my heart through and through. But what could I do, separated from you? Felix and I were stationed to the same gun: need I say that gun was never fired? but at last I left Felix to his inactive station, and flew upon deck, to see how matters were likely to end. I beheld signior Hippolyto's glorious conduct, and when Garcias boarded you I followed him.

"The evening was closing in, and, as our dresses were uniform, it was scarcely possible to distinguish friends from foes; but I instantly joined the side I favoured. We could not hope to conquer such a superior force as that against us; but I believe it was the universal intention to yield liberty and life together. However my lady Victoria soon terminated the desperate contest. I saw her not until I beheld her falling into the arms of Garcias. My sword dropped from my hand in this moment of terror and amazement, and I silently followed Garcias, who instantly bore my poor insensible lady to the cabin

in his vessel, where he left her to the care of surgeon Sancho de Gumbo, and ordered me to accompany him to the brigantine; when I found my being a traitor was yet undiscovered, and learned that, upon sight of lady Victoria, signior Hippolyto lost all self-possession and became an easy prisoner. Garcias now ordered signior Pedro to be expeditious in dressing the wounds of his companions, whose deaths he chose to be himself the cruel perpetrator of, in vengeance for their apostasy; and when the surgical business was completed, the wretch had signior Hippolyto strongly fettered in the cabin, and signior Pedro, with the rest of the prisoners, ironed in the hold. All this he saw executed himself, increasing their misery by threats and insults. By his command I attended him, when the only good I could do was to purloin a large quantity of laudanum from signior Pedro's stores.

"On my return to the caravel, Garcias ordered me to assist the cook in preparing supper—a matter which, from his voluptuous disposition, I foresaw; and, in obey-

ing him, I took care to infuse a great portion of the laudanum among the food intended for Garcias and the ship's company's supper, while into the drink I took different opportunities of throwing the rest; and whilst I attended Garcias at supper, I saw him and his associates, Sancho, Ramirez, and Fernandez, eat voraciously, and drink in proportion. I now wonder my agitation, lest the surgeon should discover the taste of the drug, did not betray me; but Garcias seemed governed the whole evening by infatuation, for he mistook my trepidation for the effect of my late illness, and ordered Sancho to give me some composing medicine when I should retire to rest; but that friendly service I had rendered him, and soon after had the rapture of beholding my nostrum taking effect. Ramirez fell off into a profound sleep; Sancho soon after closed his eyes; when Garcias and Fernandez, declaring they were invincibly drowsy too, drank more wine to rouse them, which quickly reduced them to the state I wished them to be in. I then joined my messmates, whom I found carousing so

heartily, that I doubted not of their speedily being in the situation of their officers. Many I soon heard snoring most satisfactorily; and the rest I conjectured, from their extreme fondness for liquor, would shortly find the irresistible influence of the opium.

"The moment drew near to change the watch. The dead calm of the evening did not allow the caravel to be worked, and there were only the helmsman and one watch upon deck. The men by degrees fell into a deep sleep; I therefore, without apprehension, armed myself, and hastened to Garcias, whom, with his companions, I found in a state of total insensibility. I took their lamp away, locked them in their cabin, and put the key in my pocket. Again I looked upon my messmates, and found them all exactly as I wished them to be. I extinguished all the lights and got upon deck, where, without noise, I fastened down the hatches. My lady's cabin had been locked by Garcias, and no where could I find the key; and I feared to burst the door, lest I should alarm

her and awaken any of the sleepers: one only way remained for me to get her out of the power of Garcias, and I hastened to get to it.

" The darkness of the night favoured my design : I approached the watch at the prow, a mere lad, who, believing me the relief, felt no apprehension, until, with my pistol at his breast, I terrified him into my service. I ordered him to follow me in silence: he did so; and I advanced to the helmsman, an athletic fellow, possessing a daring and intrepid spirit. To subdue him I thought would be no easy task; but Providence still favoured me. He had for some days been afflicted with a severe cough and hoarseness, and the exertions he had been forced to make during the last night's storm and the evening's battle so increased the latter, that he can now only articulate in low and indistinct whispers. I had therefore nothing to fear from his calling for assistance, though much from his resistance; and upon my conquering him depended my lady's escape, and not only

my own life, but those of many whom I esteemed. I advanced to him with a pistol presented—

" ' Henriquez,' said I, ' I am desperate: you must either yield to me, or one of us must die upon the instant.'

" ' What can you mean?' he replied alarmed.

" ' That you either accompany me instantly to the brigantine, suffer me to tie you to your post, or fight with me until one of us conquers and the other dies.'

" ' The man is mad,' said he.

" ' I am so with desperation,' I replied. ' The ship's company I have already secured to a man, and sleeping profoundly under the operation of opium, so that you have no assistance to expect from them. Come, Henriquez, be speedy in your determination.'

" ' I will fight no more to-night,' said he. ' Go to bed Diego. The fatigue you have undergone has proved too much after your late severe illness, and you are feverish.'

" Whether he really thought me delirious, and had no idea of my design, or that he was unaccountably panic-struck, I know not, but he seemed afraid of me; and, without much difficulty, I and the lad Vasquez (who luckily had a strong enmity to Henriquez) fettered and bound him to the helm. Now, preceded by Vasquez, I hastened to the boat, which was lying-to in readiness for Garcias to board the brigantine during the night, to see that Roderiquez, Guzman, and Felix, whom he left to guard the prisoners, did their duty. Without delay we rowed hither, where, as I concluded there must be some little commotion at first, I considered it better not to fetch lady Victoria until all hostilities were over, and every thing in readiness for her reception.

" Roderiquez and Guzman, believing I was come with orders from Garcias, had no suspicion of me, and therefore I conferred with Felix safely. At first we thought of liberating the prisoners before we attacked Roderiquez and Guzman;

but we afterwards considered that, while we were engaged below, they might discover our design, make off to the caravel, rouse the sleepers, and cut off all hope of rescuing my lady, for whose sake I had thus become a traitor to my master. Together then we set upon them. Not so easily were they subdued as Henriquez; but we did conquer them without bloodshed. Vasquez then raised the hatches, and we descended with our new-made prisoners.

"It would be impossible for me to describe the transport our intelligence conveyed to the poor devoted victims in the hold. I only waited to liberate Thomas, who accompanied me to the stern of the caravel. With some difficulty we got a window open, without noise, in the cabin where lady Victoria was, whom, thanks to Providence, we succeeded in bringing hither; and the moment I beheld her in safety, was the first of happiness I have felt since my dear departed lord, her noble father, left me at the castle of Paulino."

When Diego finished his eventful narrative, he was hailed by his messmates with loud acclamations, in which Victoria's, Hippolyto's, and Pedro's less boisterous applauses and acknowledgments were lost: but to deserve their praise was the highest gratification to Diego's heart.

CHAP. X.

The night was impenetrably dark, and the seamen augured from some portentous appearances in the clouds an approaching tornado. Victoria, therefore, retired to her little cabin, to offer up to the throne of mercy her thanksgivings for her late miraculous escape, and to supplicate for protection through the expected tempest. Hippolyto also, by the positive mandate of Pedro, retired to another part of the brigantine; where, with the rest of the wounded men, it was hoped he might obtain a little rest. Vain hope the angry elements destroyed; since, after grumbling and jarring for some time, they at length burst out into a degree of tremendous violence which no seaman on board had ever before witnessed.

The storm on the preceding night might be termed a gentle breeze when compared

to this; and the vessel was much less able to contend with it, considerably damaged by the late action; and although she had gained four capital hands from the caravel, three of her last night's crew were disabled by wounds, and Hippolyto could now be scarcely of any service. Victoria soon was chased by terror from her little cabin to the deck; where the wounded men crept too, and where every instant, immersed by the boiling surges, they expected to be washed away.

The horrors of the tempest increasing fast, every man exerted himself in the performance of his duty; in which kindness and attention to Victoria were not forgotten. Hippolyto scarcely left her a moment, since he could now be of little use to the harassed seamen. The fetters of Rodriguez and Guzman were struck off, since their assistance became necessary in the moment of general danger; and dreadful was that moment. The howling and ungovernable wind rushed with headlong fury to the bottom of the deep, to stir up rage and strife; while the indignant sea, agitated to

convulsive foam, arose in boiling surges to the clouds, to dare the bold disturber of his serenity. The heavy sable clouds, hurried impetuously along, all clashed in discord, and rolled in awful peals their most tremendous thunder, whilst livid lightning flashed almost incessantly; and the whole expansion of the Mediterranean sea now appeared like columns and rocks of flaming fire; except when at intervals the most horrible darkness rested on its surface, shutting out for a moment even the foaming billows from every mortal eye.

Against this dreadful conflict the vessel had not power to contend. The masts and rigging were shattered to pieces, and borne away from time to time by the unpitying winds; whilst the raging billows attacked her with equal violence, hurling her from hill to valley, which the surges made, without mercy or respite.

Hippolyto still anxiously supported Victoria, whose fortitude was terribly shaken by the painful reflexion of her being the means of destruction to so many humane individuals. Wounded gratitude drew torrents

of agonising tears from her, whilst her heart and lips devoutly breathed forth prayers to her Creator, into whose presence she now each moment expected to be summoned; and Hippolyto's attention was divided between those serious thoughts which sincere piety inspired, and the most tender care of our heroine, whose fate appeared to disturb his mind infinitely more than his own.

Disaster upon disaster succeeded through this night of horrors; and the morning's dawn found them completely dismasted, deprived of their rudder, and the shattered hulk nothing better than a wreck. Whilst there remained any thing to be done for the general safety, the mariners had been indefatigable in their exertions and toil; but, when dreadfully convinced that the possibility of being useful was past, they threw themselves, certain of inevitable destruction, upon the deck, in desponding hopeless groups. In this moment of awful inaction, thought acquired full dominion over all. The days that were past recurred to some in terrible array, and told them a tale they had long refused to hear. Those who

had scoffed at the existence of a Deity now felt conviction unbidden arise, and, as the delusions of life were passing off, believed and trembled; whilst those who through their existence loved and revered their Creator, found the ties that bound them to him draw closer round their hearts, as they believed themselves approaching to his presence.

Diego and Thomas crept close to Hippolyto and Victoria, still offering them every assistance in their power, and striving by the means of some wet sails to screen them from the impetuosity of the angry surges; evincing their fidelity, and the warmth of their attachment, in a moment when interested motives could no longer actuate.

The boats had been long since washed from the deck, and each instant large planks of the hulk were torn off, and carried away with dreadful violence by the implacable billows. They had, whilst in their power, fired signals of distress. They had heard the same dreadful signals repeated by many fellow sufferers; but no one came to their relief. The cruel and outrageous elements

had now wrested every hope away, and in awful silence they all sat expecting the moment of inevitable death—some with eyes raised to heaven; others with their heads sunk upon their breast, in gloomy despair; while some more, with lingering fondness for life, looked wistfully around for succour, which departed hope no longer promised them.

At length, when morning's dawn advanced to clear and certain light, Guzman, suddenly exclaiming that he saw rocks at no great distance, as suddenly disencumbering himself from his upper garment, plunged into the sea and made for them. This break upon the general awful silence, by restoring the soother hope, roused at once the faculties of all to action, and many of his messmates on the instant instinctively followed Guzman; while others, more wary, paused to observe the fate of their precipitate companions before they ventured. But as Guzman and his group were seen to buffet successfully with the waves, and to emerge constantly, unsubdued from the foaming whirlpools, after having appeared

to the hoping, fearing, panting beholders to have been ingulfed, these determined, as a forlorn hope, to make also for the rocks, which they now distinctly saw.

Dreadfully the wounded mariners now groaned, as if their misfortunes were augmented by the prospect of their comrades' safety. Pedro, Thomas, and a few more, advancing to Hippolyto, desired him fearlessly to venture with them, as they would take it by turns to supply the loss of his disabled arm.

"Come, come, dear heart, cheer up and launch!" vociferated Thomas: "I could swim for a wager with any lubberly fish in the deep. I'll therefore warrant to tow you safely into harbour, d—n my eyes but I wull! So weigh anchor, my prince of heroes! I'll be your rudder; and Diego, as swift and steady a sailor as e'er skimmed the ocean, shall be your helmsman."

"Can lady Victoria be saved?" Hippolyto anxiously demanded.

"No; that would be an utter impossibility," was mournfully reiterated by all.

"Then go, my friends—delay not; and

may Heaven conduct you in safety!" said Hippolyto, with a farewell and hurrying motion of his hand; and then sadly turned with a countenance of tenderness and anguish to the care of Victoria, from whom his attention had for some moments wandered to observe the progress of Guzman's attempt.

"What!" exclaimed Thomas, "and leave you here to founder with the Victoria?"

"Yes, certainly. But go, my friends, delay not," replied Hippolyto mournfully—but without averting his face from his lovely charge, whose struggling feelings at that moment created new alarms in his anxious breast.

"What! sail without you? Then I'll be d—n'd if I do!" and down Thomas squatted close to Hippolyto, whose legs he clasped with the utmost energy, as if apprehensive of being torn by violence from him. "Split my heart now if that was not a d—n'd cruel and unreasonable order for any commander to issue! But these signals we Britons ever mutiny at. No, d—n my

eyes! we never sheer off from our captain or our friends in distress, and leave them to founder without us. But such of my messmates as can prove such dastardly renegadoes, let them weigh anchor in the d—l's name, and may they live to be stranded upon the shoals of ingratitude, d—n my eyes!"

The men now, all but Pedro, plunged into the sea, attended by the piteous moans of their wounded messmates, and a thousand hearty d—ns, hisses, groans, and hoots from the indignant Thomas, who in vain assured them "the Lord High Admiral aloft would one day have them before the mast for deserting their captain and friends in distress."

Pedro, looking for some moments irresolutely, at length firmly said, "My fate is fixed, I cannot leave you."

"You must, my good Pedro," replied Hippolyto: "if you have any friendship for me, you must strive to save yourself, and seek out those who are interested for my fate. Gently break this sad catastrophe to them, and comfort those who will feel it most severely. You must also go to conte

Ariosto, and impart to him all that has befallen his angel sister. Great is your feeling, Pedro, and you will execute this sad commission as sympathy shall guide you. Then delay not, Pedro, instantly depart, I conjure you :—and, Thomas, to you it is my earnest, my last request, that you accompany Pedro."

" I'll be d—n'd if I do then! that's flat," returned Thomas sulkily: "so heave no more lingo about it."

Victoria, who had long been struggling with those painful feelings which gratitude awakened to such excess inspired, found not the power of articulation until the moment when Pedro seemed yielding to the importunities of Hippolyto, when in the most emphatic tones of ardent supplication she exclaimed——

" Go not, I beseech, I implore you, Pedro, without Hippolyto. Save him! save him! Lead him to his friends and family! Let them not curse me as the occasion of their grief! Ard oh! if you hope again to be happy with your Isabella, let my last sad moment be spared the agonising pang of

knowing myself the destroyer of Hippolyto."

"Spare your entreaties, generous, lovely Victoria, since vain is every effort to alter my fixed determination," said Hippolyto.—"Go, then, Pedro. I will not leave her,—no, never, never. Go: delay is dangerous; and friendship commands you to be gone."

Pedro now, after snatching a parting look at the sad group he was compelled to leave behind him, plunged amid the foaming surf, and made after the other swimmers. Victoria shrieking wildly, as her hope of Hippolyto's safety was thus cut off, started to her knees, and entreated, supplicated, but in vain, that he would follow Pedro.

"Oh, Hippolyto," she cried, "be not thus cruel and inexorable! On you depends the life of your faithful Thomas. Embitter not, I conjure you, my last sad reflexions, by making me the cause of your and his destruction. Too many fellow-sufferers! must I inevitably have these hapless wounded friends; must—" In looking towards the men she spoke of, she

beheld Diego standing near, gazing with looks of anguish on her.

"Diego too!" she exclaimed in a tone of horror, "what, what detains you here?"

"My duty, lady—stationed here by gratitude to your dear father's memory; and I dare not leave my post."

Victoria burst into a violent flood of tears, whilst Thomas vehemently shook Diego by the hand, shouting—"A staunch heart, d—n my eyes! Who's afraid of foundering in a good cause, do you see? And belike, Diego, if we sail with such a convoy, we may not be sent adrift from heaven; but be stowed into a snug birth there, out of respect to the virtues of those who towed us thither."

"To die while performing the duty which Heaven itself dictates," Diego replied, "may mitigate the doom I am conscious I too well merit."

That gratitude which the conduct of these men inspired, conquered every feeling of personal danger in Victoria's mind. But for their safety her heart was tortured to direst

anguish; and softened to the most infantine weakness by their extraordinary kindness, she sunk quite subdued from her knees upon the wet deck, and wept abundantly—Hippolyto in vain endeavouring to assuage the excess of her affliction; for every new instance of tender attention she received from him, or act of kindness from their faithful humble friends, only increased her anguish.

For near an hour after Pedro left them they continued in this distressing hopeless situation, each moment augmenting their calamities by depriving them of more and more of the wreck upon which they floated. At length Thomas, who had been for some time intently gazing at something which the angry billows were tossing roughly about, suddenly plunged into the sea; and Diego, in a few minutes more, discovering it to be a boat, swam after Thomas with a hope of gaining it; which they at length providentially did, and, after inconceivable difficulty, dangers, and fatigue, succeeded in towing it to the wreck by a cable which

the angry elements had allowed to remain fastened to it.

The duration of this attempt was a moment of agonising solicitude. The most fervent prayers for success broke from the lips of every one, and great was the transport, almost amounting to phrensied joy, when the bold enterprise was achieved which restored the truant hope: and when they had torn some shattered planks from the wreck to supply the place of oars, and had made all ready for the embarkation of their fellow-sufferers, Thomas exultingly exclaimed, first d—ning his eyes, with evident satisfaction—

"Providence, do you see, has heaved up this here pinnace from the hatches of the deep, to bilk that shark Davy Jones of his prey. And be of good cheer, do you mind, for by the boat's name and make I know her to be English; and that there old dog Neptune, loving the British oak, will splice out the care of Providence in steering us into a safe port."

These shipwrecked sufferers all now en-

tered the pinnace, and, consigning themselves to the care of Providence, were soon borne from the wreck, when they found, notwithstanding every exertion, their oars of little use. Diego and Thomas attempted to steer by turns, but soon were compelled, by the ungovernable fury of the breakers, to consign the helm to the mercy of the elements, which bore them to leeward with dreadful velocity; one moment mounting them aloft to a most terrific height, the next hurling them with headlong precipitance to the gulfs beneath; and in about an hour after they had abandoned the wreck, by the ordinance of Providence they were driven in safety upon the leeshore; but in what clime or latitude, from the frequent shifting of the wind after they had been bereft of their compass in the night, they were totally unable to ascertain: from the aspect of the country, however, they conjectured it to be the south of France.

Dripping with wet, and almost stiff with cold and fatigue, they lost no time in quitting their friendly bark; and the moment

they found themselves upon terra firma, they all, as if inspired by some resistless impulse, at the same instant, intuitively sunk upon their knees and offered a pious and fervent thanksgiving to that beneficent Being, who had been graciously pleased to save them from a fate they had for many hours believed inevitable.

The tumult of joy and gratitude which they all naturally experienced cannot be described, and only conceived by those who have been in a similar situation; and Victoria's happiness upon the safety of her generous deliverers was as exquisite as her grief had been poignant; and like that too it expressed itself by tears.

CHAP. XI.

THEIR solemn and devout acknowledgements for the mercy of Heaven being ended, our adventurers advanced some way up the country, Hippolyto supporting Victoria, while Diego and Thomas gave their assistance to their wounded messmates, without meeting any person or discovering any habitation, or even shelter from the violent torrents of rain save some large spreading trees. But they were all now too much accustomed to wet garments to shrink from the heavy rain. Cold, weary, and faint, they panted for the comforts of some hospitable dwelling; and still hoping to meet the object of their eager search, they proceeded onward as quickly as their exhausted frames, and the weight of their clothes drenched by the sea and rain, would admit of.

The further they advanced, the more were they persuaded of their being cast

upon the southern coast of France. And they were right in their conjectures; they were in Provence, not many leagues from the confines of Italy. But an almost impenetrable mist, arising from the rain, prevented their distinguishing objects at any distance; and without any friendly beacon to guide them, they wandered about until, almost subdued by toil and exertions, they began to despair of finding what they so anxiously sought. And Victoria, Hippolyto, and the wounded seamen, were agreeing to shelter themselves beneath the luxuriant branches of some orange-trees, while Diego and Thomas should penetrate further, with a hope of meeting with some accommodation, when their ears were suddenly greeted by the sound of a convent-bell tolling for matins at no great distance from them. It was the peal of hope and joy to them; and with renovated strength and spirits the before-fainting adventurers were led on by the sound to the gate of a monastery, which had been obscured from their view by the thick foliage of the wood in which it was embosomed.

Thomas, in his eagerness to serve his distressed companions, outstripped their speed, and by a loud peal summoned an aged porter, of the Carthusian order, to the gate, and demanded admittance and food for his shipwrecked companions and himself. This was humanely assented to; when Thomas, in the turbulence of his joy, gave a loud whistle, followed by three cheers; which so alarmed the holy man, who believed them to be signals for a banditti to approach, that he instantly closed the gate. Nor could all the protestations and entreaties of Hippolyto and the rest of the distressed party prevail upon him to disband his fears, until the piteous tones of Victoria's magical voice reached his ears; at the sound of which everyapprehension vanished, and the gate flew open, not for her admission, but for the reverend man to announce his commiseration and concern at being compelled to the cruel inhospitality of refusing to let her enter;—but it was against the rules of their order, he said, to admit any female without a licence from the bishop of the diocese.

Victoria's head sunk in despondence upon Hippolyto's shoulder, and she burst into tears; while Hippolyto and Diego looked on each other in grief and consternation for advice in this unexpected dilemma. But the rage and indignation of Thomas, breaking through all bounds of respect for the poor Carthusian, burst forth in the most virulent abuse, which fortunately his vehemence and strange medley of languages rendered almost unintelligible.

"And you will not then admit her, holy father?" said Hippolyto mournfully—"Behold the sad state she is reduced to—only look upon her, and then refuse to shelter her if you can."

"Poor child!" replied the porter, "from my soul I pity her; but I dare not transgress the rules of our pious institution."

"Pious institution!" repeated Thomas contemptuously. "D—n my eyes, a pretty sham that! Hoisting false colours with a vengeance! A d—d piratical renegado hanging out a government flag! Fair weather faces, but foul weather hearts! A pious institution! Old Will o' th' wisp!

that refuses an almost foundering little bark a safe harbour! A pious institution, to snug yourself up like a snail in your own inhospitable house, that will admit no one else! A pious institution, d—n my eyes! that—"

"I will assist my afflicted daughter as much as lies in my power," interrupted the porter meekly.

"Well," cried Thomas impatiently, "heave no more lingo then; but pipe all hands, and tow her into harbour, do you see."

"I will conduct her to the church," said the porter, "and take refreshments to her there. I can do no more."

"What, to the cold church!" exclaimed Thomas.

"Yes: the church is a sanctuary for all who take refuge in it."

"Then you should navigate your piety by that chart, do you see. God, you say, harbours all who sail to his port for refuge; and he has made that signal for you to steer by."

The porter, not in the least offended by

Thomas's bluntness, probably from not perfectly comprehending his strange mixture of broken French and Spanish grafted upon his English sea vocabulary, stood gazing intently at our heroine; and at length he said in a voice of compassion—"There is no fire in the church, and this poor child is shivering with cold, and dripping wet—what can I do?"

"Do!" cried Thomas: "why, run her into dry dock to refit, to be sure."

"I dare not take it upon myself to do what my heart dictates; but I will hear what brother Anselmo says," replied the porter, ringing a bell.

"Oh!" exclaimed Thomas, clinching his fists, and stamping his feet in a paroxysm of rage, "Oh, that you were but a *young* lubber, *mounseer*, that I might knock you and your scruples down together!"

In a moment more two monks appeared at the gate. One was young, heavy-eyed, enveloped in a mass of flesh, and evidently fonder of the luxuries than the mortifications of life: the other, an aged man, seemed Piety personified. In his deportment were

dignity and grace, happily blended with unaffected modesty; while his fine venerable countenance legibly displayed the sparkling intelligence of superior intellect, softened by the sweetly interesting brow of placid serenity, humility, and beneficence. The porter briefly announced to him the distress that sued for admittance; when hastily advancing to our heroine—

"My child," said he in a voice formed from the sweetest tones of nature, and improved by the harmony of conscious virtue, "my sweet child, were I superior here, I think for your sake I should be tempted to infringe the austere rules of our order; but, alas! for you I am but of little consequence in this monastery: yet will I trespass for you. A little penance will rectify all; and I think I would willingly encounter a great one to do you service. I will venture to take you to the porter's lodge, where a cheerful fire blazes; and I trust my rendering you this little service, my daughter, will not impede my way to heaven."

"Impede!" vociferated Thomas. "No, no, old True Blue, it will be both wind and

tide in your favour. Good actions are the best passports to heaven. So, do you see, be getting under-weigh for that harbour, and run the dear little bark into snug moorings."

Father Anselmo kindly led Victoria into the porter's lodge, and placed her in a comfortable easy chair, before an excellent fire, while the rest of the party followed the good man's steps. Victoria, looking around and beholding all her protectors in safety and comfortable shelter, wept the sweet tears of gratitude and pleasure. Father Anselmo ordered the porter to hasten to the refectory for some cordials and other refreshments for their weary guests, and to bring something particularly delicate for their poor daughter, who seemed quite subdued by fatigue and suffering."

"Oh! think not of me, holy father," exclaimed Victoria, "think not of me, I conjure you, until these my wounded companions are attended to. It cannot be against the rules of your order to shelter them, and they have been severely wounded in the cause of humanity; and all they have en-

countered, during the horrors and fatigues of the tempest, must have proved dreadfully inimical to their wounds, and I tremble for their safety. Oh! delay not your attention to them, I entreat, I implore you, dear good and reverend father! To assist them will be the highest act of kindness you can show to me, and will renovate my strength and spirits more effectually than any anodyne your humanity can bestow upon me."

"My daughter, your grateful anxiety shall be relieved," said the holy man. "Brother Augustine, conduct these our wounded sons into the house, where our daughter may rest satisfied that every possible care shall be taken of them."

The wounded seamen departed with the fat Carthusian; but Hippolyto, inexorable to the entreaties of father Anselmo and Victoria, absolutely refused to quit our heroine before he should leave her in a safe asylum.

"There is a convent of Benedictine sisters, dedicated to St. Marguerite, not much more than a league from hence, where she would be safe, and tenderly attended to,"

said father Anselmo. "The prioress is a sister of mine, who has been lately exalted by her virtues to that high station; and she would, I think, love and cherish this drooping child. But, short as the distance is, it would be impossible for her to walk there in her exhausted state; and to wait until we could procure a conveyance from the nearest town might prove a dangerous delay; for she ought instantly to be put into a warm bed, and every precaution taken to rescue her from the unpleasant consequences that may else attend the fatigue, cold, and terror she has encountered."

Hippolyto was in an agony of alarm about her—"What could be done for her immediate accommodation," he eagerly demanded. Thomas proposed that he and Diego should make a raft of their arms to heave her up on, and bear away with her to the port of St. Marguerite's; and Diego was planning to carry her thither in the porter's chair, when father Anselmo suddenly thought of a nearer asylum.

"There is," said he, "a château at a very inconsiderable distance from this monastery,

which is generally let to invalids who come into Provence for the benefit of our salubrious air. The family who inhabited it this year past are just gone: but I hear it has already got other tenants; and if the principals are not yet arrived, there must surely be some female domestic there, who would, for a proper gratuity, give the requisite assistance to our poor child, whom by to-morrow I trust we shall be able to remove to St. Marguerite's; and if not, we can procure from thence, and our own convent, every medicinal and other aid she can require."

The porter now returned loaded with refreshments; of which Victoria eagerly partook, and was so much renovated by them and the good fire, that, with her remaining companions, she was soon able, after making their acknowledgments to the humane porter, to bend their way to the château, which from the convent-gate they saw through a visto, at a very trifling distance.

Soon they arrived at the gate of the château; when the good father Anselmo, who accompanied them, requested an asylum for

a young shipwrecked female, from the porter, who sullenly replied—"they harboured no mendicant friars or pilgrims."

"Nor does any mendicant friar solicit admission," returned Anselmo with dignity. "The monks of St. Lewis want not the assistance of any human being for themselves; but it is for this young fainting female, who was wrecked upon our coast in the tremendous tempest of last night, that I now supplicate an asylum here."

"I do not want for charity," said the porter; "but I mig ht lose my place were I to shelter such objects as those."

The appearance of our adventurers too well sanctioned the contemptible opinion this man entertained of them. The garb of Hippolyto, Diego, and Thomas, was the uniform worn by Don Manuel's people; and the impetuous winds, rain, and billows, had rent and washed away every symptom of former respectability. All Victoria's ornaments had been removed or lost, during her indisposition, in the caravel of Garcias, or been blown away in the subsequent storm. Her beautiful hair, liberated from all con-

finement, deluged by the sea and rain, literally flowed around her neck and shoulders; her garments, which, when she fled from Don Manuel's castle, were elegant and superb, now hung in dirty, tattered, half-wet, remnants round her; and nothing could be more deplorable and poverty-struck than the aspect of them all.

Hippolyto, to remove every suspicion of poverty, put some pieces of gold into the porter's hand; when instantly the gate was thrown open, and the whole party admitted into the hall, where a large fire blazed, and where chairs were now courteously set before it for them all. The porter was informed by Anselmo, that it was necessary for Victoria to go immediately into a warm bed, to prevent if possible any fatal effects from the severe cold she had but too evidently caught.

"That is out of my power to accommodate her with," said the porter: "but the moment the housekeeper rises, which will not be this hour or two, I will speak to her about it; and I think a little of that black gentleman's arguments will quickly

persuade her; as my lord has not yet arrived, and there are, therefore, plenty of spare beds in the château."

"D—n the swab!" cried Thomas; "won't she turn out a bit sooner to steer a sick body into a snug birth?"

"I dare not wake her," replied the now civil porter; "for if she has not her sleep out she is as cross as the d—l all the day."

"If I knew what port to come alongside of her in, I'd pipe her from her hammock," said Thomas, whistling loud by way of specimen; which in a moment drew half a dozen lacqueys into the hall, who entered yawning and stretching, and, with eyes half open, demanded the cause of the uproar: which the porter telling, they drew chairs into the circle to gratify their curiosity by staring at our poor heroine; and in a moment more a female domestic made her appearance, and inquired the reason of such a tumult. One of the lacqueys briefly stated the fact, and then continued—"Do, dear Annette, be like yourself, compassionate: go and awake madame Bourdaloue, and tell

her how sick, wet, and weary the poor girl is who wants a bed."

"Poor thing!" cried Annette, "I will do all I can for her:" and she turned to go out of the door she had entered by.

"Do, pray, good Annette," said the injudicious young man; "do, pray, for I feel quite interested for the poor girl, she is so young, and so very beautiful."

"Beautiful!" repeated Annette contemptuously. "Oh, I had quite forgotten: 'tis not madame Boudaloue's hour for rising, and I will not awake her, let the girl be ever so beautiful, monsieur François!" and she walked scornfully across the hall to another part of the château.

"D—n your squinting eyes," vociferated Thomas: "because the vessel's well built, you sheer off from her in her distress, you ugly wizen swab, you!"

"I would myself go to madame," said the humane François, "only that by awaking her before her time I should make her cross and disobliging." Then perceiving that Diego, who was standing behind Victoria's

chair, looked fatigued, asked him with kindness, why he did not take a seat?

"It would but ill become me," replied Diego, "to sit in the presence of my lady."

"Lady!" repeated the rest of the lacqueys, smothering a laugh, whilst they cast a sneering glance upon Victoria's tattered drapery.

Diego could bear no more. Such repeated insults to his lady's consequence taught him at once to forget the importance of secresy, and with mien erect and indignant frown he haughtily said—"And I must add, that it ill befits any of the persons present, excepting the holy father and signior Hippolyto, to sit in the presence of lady Victoria di Modena, the daughter of the late and sister to the present most illustrious conte di Ariosto."

In a moment the porter and lacqueys were upon their feet, and seats and all removed to the farthest extremity of the hall; where bowing obsequiously, they offered a hundred thousand apologies for their indecorous conduct; then threw open the door of a

grand apartment, where two of the men instantly set about lighting a fire, and Annette was loudly summoned to go and awake madame Bourdaloue; while the compassionate lacqueys precipitately retreated from the hall, and in a few moments returned, following a very pretty young woman, who, pale, trembling, and almost breathless with agitation, rushed in, and, throwing herself at Victoria's feet, rapturously caught both her hands, which she pressed to her heart, to her lips; while sobs and tears of joy deprived her of the power of utterance.

Victoria's recollection, at first suspended by astonishment at the young woman's conduct, at length returned, and she almost frantically exclaimed—

"Roselia! my dear Roselia!" and, sinking from her seat upon the young woman's neck, wept aloud.

"Oh, my dear, dear, dear, my own lady!" at length sobbed out the affectionate Roselia, who was the identical little Tuscan girl mentioned in our first pages, who had been Victoria's playmate and attendant from her infancy, and was tenderly and deservedly

beloved by her, " little did I think I should ever behold you or my lost happiness more! To sink speedily into an early grave was all the hope I had to save me from despair; for from that fatal day you were torn from me I have been a forlorn miserable wretch, and my health so rapidly declined, that the duchessa sent me hither, with a hope this air might be of service to me. But surely I should soon have fallen a victim to my grief, had I not found my own darling lady again. But how have I found her? Oh my bursting heart! Cold, wet, and ill. Oh, what a situation this for my lady Victoria to be in! Alas! alas! what can I do for her, to evince my affection, my gratitude?"

Hippolyto approaching Roselia, took one of her hands, and pressed it with grateful fervor. " Put lady Victoria instantly into a warm bed," said he. Roselia, precipitately turning to answer the speaker, on perceiving her white hand grasped by a black one, shrunk from its touch; which Victoria observing, and alarmed and hurt lest Hippolyto's feelings should be wound-

ed by such a manifest appearance of disgust, hastily, but tremulously, said—" My Roselia, this gentleman, this friend, restored me to you. Love him for my sake, since to him, and these his brave companions, am I indebted for life, for more than life. They rescued me from wretchedness; and, oh! what wondrous tales have I to recount to you of all their goodness to me!" and she wept anew.

" Is it to him I owe my lady Victoria's life? Then he is my friend, and I shall love him for his own sake," sobbed out Roselia, carrying with eager gratitude that hand to her lips which but a moment before she had shrunk from the touch of.

" But cannot you, Roselia, procure me a bed?" said Victoria. " Indeed, indeed, I am unable to sit up much longer."

" Go instantly, François," said Roselia, " and order Jeanne to light a fire in the duchessa's chamber, and Annette to warm the bed. I shall myself undress my lady, and give her some of the duchessa's night things."

"What duchessa do you talk of, my good Roselia?" faintly demanded Victoria.

"Of Manfredonia, madam, your aunt."

"Holy virgin!" exclaimed Victoria starting from her seat. "Exhausted as I am, Hippolyto, I must wander further on. Here I cannot remain."

Roselia assured her that she might safely; for though they had expected the duchessa the preceding day, by which means her bed was ready aired, an express had arrived late in the evening, to say she should not come for three weeks longer; and as Hippolyto strongly urged her to remain there for a day or two, she at length assented.

Father Anselmo now gave some directions to Roselia relative to the treatment of Victoria, to prevent, if possible, any unpleasant effects from all she had lately suffered, and promised to return in an hour with one of the fathers of St. Lewis, who was a skilful physician.

Annette now appeared, to announce the apartment being in readiness for our heroine's reception. Victoria instantly arose,

and, throwing one hand upon Roselia's shoulder, extended the other to Hippolyto.

"Hippolyto, my friend! my deliverer! farewell!" said she, "and believe me I carry with me a just impression of your kindness to me. You now leave me in a place of safety; and delay not, I conjure you, to return to St. Lewis with this holy father, who will, I am sure, be careful of you. But remember, Hippolyto, you must not neglect yourself. Be assured I shall know no peace until I hear you are not to suffer more for your humanity to me. Adieu then, my preserver! my friend! and believe me, I shall think each hour a century until I see you restored to health." Then raising her eyes to give a last look to this her amiable, her highly estimated friend, she beheld him so dejected, so grieved, so full of anguish, at the idea of their separation, that her head sunk upon Roselia's shoulder to conceal her emotion, which now was nearly equal to his own. He had taken her offered hand; she had felt, in his tremulous grasp, the convulsive agitation of

his frame; her sympathising frame caught the infectious tremor, and she wondered what it could mean; and after a thoughtful pause she again raised her head, betraying a face suffused with the sweetest blushes of timid sensibility, while down her lovely cheeks strayed the pearly drops of sorrow, caught from Hippolyto's grief, or prompted by her own. And to Thomas she now addressed an unembarrassed, and, in consequence, eloquent acknowledgment for his humanity to her; entreated his particular attention to Hippolyto and Diego; and requested to see him the subsequent day, that she might learn from him how his invalid companions were going on. Then turning to Diego, she was about to speak her farewell and thanks to him, when he, respectfully bowing, interrupted her by saying—

"Lady Victoria forgets that, in being her domestic, I have a claim to an asylum here."

Victoria, happy in the idea of Diego's remaining near her, recommended him in the most effectual manner to the care of the

domestics, and desired the same directions father Anselmo had given for her should be observed towards Diego. Then making her acknowledgments to the benevolent monk, she left the hall to retire to rest.

CHAP. XII.

VICTORIA, attended by Annette, was led by Roselia to an elegant apartment, where a cheerful fire blazed, and where the anxious Roselia, with the two other females, Annette and Jeanne, hastened to obey the good monk's injunctions, and then put our heroine into a warm and comfortable bed; where madame Bourdaloue, who had been informed what guest the château was honoured with, made her swallow some very potent wine whey, which soon threw her into a heavy slumber, in which she appeared so restless and uneasy, and moaned so piteously, that poor Roselia was in an agony of apprehension, and watched with trembling impatient solicitude for the promised visit of father Anselmo and his medical brother, who, punctual to their time, at length arrived; when the physician, father Pierre, after observing her pulse, and her uneasy

sleep, declared, to the concern of all, but to the inconsolable grief of the affectionate Roselia, that he apprehended a fever was coming on, and of a kind that would make rapid advances. And he spoke but too prophetically; for in his return in the evening he found her in the delirium of a raging fever, which continued for five days with augmenting violence; and it required all the exertions of this good monk's skill—and he possessed almost as much as the humane Pedro—to bring her through it. But from the moment the disorder arrived at its crisis it took a favourable turn; and her amendment became so rapid, that in eight days after her fever's height she was able to quit her bed, and in the course of four subsequent days to go into the adjoining dressing-room, and to walk a little about her apartments, assisted by the almost heart-broken Roselia, whom no persuasion could tear from the bedside of her adored lady as long as she was confined to it, although two hospital sisters had been sent from the Benedictine nuns to nurse Victoria.

In the first dawn of returning reason, our

grateful heroine anxiously inquired from father Pierre for her friends under his care; and he relieved her solicitude by assuring her they all were well. But in this the good monk's humanity led him to deceive her; since Hippolyto and Diego had, like herself, been dangerously ill, and were now, like her, only just giving faint hopes of recovery; but both in total ignorance of her indisposition, a knowledge of which the monk soon found would but augment theirs. The wounded seamen were going on surprisingly even from their first entrance into the monastery; and Thomas had suffered little bodily inconvenience since the two first days after his shipwreck: but of mental infliction he had his share, since he knew of Victoria's and Diego's danger; and never left the pillow of Hippolyto, even to take a short repose, but sat by the side of his gallant captain, as he called him, blubbering over him like a child, notwithstanding all the eloquence of the good Carthusians, who strove in vain to preach back his manhood to him.

When abating illness allowed Victoria to

be sufficiently collected, she employed Roselia—whose attendance she now would not suffer to be so unremitting, as she saw by the languor and striking alteration in her countenance how infinite had been her fatigue and anxiety—to write to conte Ariosto a slight account of her situation; and to entreat him, as she could have no hope of his being able to quit his regiment at such a juncture, to send father Alberti to her immediately. Roselia also wrote a letter to signora Farinelli, requesting to see her as soon as possible; which letter Victoria desired her to direct to the care of Ursuline's brother at Florence.

Victoria's anxiety for her removal to St. Marguerite's hourly increased, as the time for the duchessa's coming approached; and in fifteen days after her arrival in Provence, father Pierre—in answer to her earnest entreaty for permission to remove to the convent of St. Marguerite, the abbess of which had visited her twice, and won her highest admiration—promised her that in three days more she should go, as he thought by that time she might remove without much dan-

ger; and that he and father Anselmo should accompany her and Roselia there in a coach, which he would order from Nice to convey them.

From this time, her mind being more at ease, Victoria's health and strength rapidly augmented. The presence of the hospital sisters being no longer necessary, they returned to their convent; and Victoria's renovating spirits soon enabled her to enter into long conferences with Roselia, from whom she learned all that had occurred in conte Vicenza's family since her banishment. After pathetically recounting the distress of herself and the rest of Victoria's domestics, at losing so mysteriously their beloved young lady, Roselia continued—

" All lady Victoria's poor sorrowful attendants were immediately dismissed, except myself, whom the duchessa chose to retain in the place of Hero: and not very long after lady Victoria's departure, the comte de Montfort and conte di Urbino returned from the chace; when the latter learned all that had happened during his absence. Conte di Urbino, I had reason

to know, beheld my dear young lady with partiality too great for his repose; and upon this sad intelligence he flew, half frantic with grief and dismay, to the duchessa, with whom he had a long conference, but left her with his fine countenance pale as death, his air dejected, and his whole frame almost convulsed by agitation, and hastened to conte Vicenza, with whom he had some high words; after which several of the domestics saw conte Urbino, during the day, wandering about in the wood, or lying on the banks of the lake, like one subdued by sorrow and despair. But from that evening neither he nor conte Vicenza was ever seen or heard of during the time I remained at the château, which was until a few days before lady Victoria's arrival here.

" Comte de Montfort did not quit the château as the other guests did, upon the mysterious departure of conte Vicenza; for the duchessa was so low-spirited, she entreated his stay until some intelligence could be obtained of her husband or his nephew, the extraordinary absence of whom

she appeared totally at a loss to account for."

Roselia now changed colour, and hesitated for a few moments in evident embarrassment: at length she proceeded—

"It would but ill become me to animadvert upon the conduct of my superiors. Particularly lady Victoria, I hope, will believe the painful intelligence I am compelled to communicate to her I would not for worlds shock her by, were it not, alas! become too public for concealment. Almost from my first residence at the château di Vicenza I remember to have heard the domestics often talking of the light conduct of the duchessa; and when I grew old enough to form opinions upon what I heard, I concluded their scandal arose from enmity, or the depravity of their own hearts. But soon, alas! when about her person, I learned that their innuendos were but too well grounded; for I then plainly saw how very regardless she was of fame, and how deficient she was in all that could make a female estimable. Reared by signora Fari-

nelli, and being through life the constant humble companion of lady Victoria di Modena, my mind from precept and example had caught the flame of genuine purity; and my countenance, too ingenuous to conceal my feelings, betrayed my detestation of her conduct; and in consequence, under pretence of this air being beneficial for my declining health, I was sent with some of comte de Montfort's domestics to this château, which he has lately taken, and where it is expected the duchessa will reside until the divorce takes place between her and conte Vicenza, which is now publicly talked of: and here, I find, her nuptials with comte de Montfort are to be celebrated."

Victoria, although prepared by Polydore and Hero for this intelligence, felt dreadfully shocked at this incontestable confirmation of her aunt's depravity: and she wept in silence; for as such conduct could not be defended, so she was too dutiful to raise her voice in condemnation of her father's sister. But she now mentally resolved, as soon as father Alberti and Ursuline should arrive, to take the proper steps for enabling

her to choose another guardian; and the hour for her departure to the Benedictine convent was now more ardently wished for than ever, since to remain longer under the roof of her aunt's paramour she thought a most reprehensible degradation to her purity. But she found father Pierre inexorable to her petition for hastening her removal; although he informed her with a good-humoured smile, that he had another petitioner for her speedy removal to St. Marguerite's. "Monsieur Hippolyto," said he, "longs most impatiently to have the happiness of seeing you. But know, he must not plead for the honour of an interview until, under the protection of the prioress of St. Marguerite's, you can with propriety grant it to him; for now, he says, necessity no longer compels you to measures from which your spotless and trembling purity was ever revolting."

"Tell him, reverend father," replied Victoria, "that my wish to see my preserver has not been the least powerful in urging my anxiety for my removal."

The day preceding that fixed on for Victoria's little journey, she ventured, supported by Roselia and Jeanne, into the pleasure-grounds, where for the first time since her residence in the château she saw Diego: and sincere was their pleasure at meeting, although the altered appearance and visible weakness of each proclaimed to the other their recent indisposition; and Diego, in speaking of his, mentioned with the most animated gratitude Roselia's attention and humanity to him; for although Roselia had totally dedicated herself to attend her adored lady, she yet forgot not him who had befriended that lady, and had therefore taken every precaution to prevent his experiencing any neglect; and since Victoria had ceased to require her whole attention, she had often visited Diego, to see that every thing was done for his comfort and restoration to health.

"My beloved Roselia," said Victoria, affectionately embracing her, "how have you increased my obligations to you by this kindness to my friend, my good Diego!"

" If lady Victoria loves me," replied Roselia, " she will not talk of being obliged to me, who owe to her every comfort I possess. Monsieur Diego was kind to my dear lady in her distress, and well he merits the esteem and attention of all attached to her: as for myself, I shall ever regard and reverence him as if he were my father."

The before pale cheeks of Diego now flushed to a deep tint of crimson. " And from your attachment to our amiable and honoured lady, and from your humanity to me, I shall ever behold you with the attention of a tender friend and *brother*," said Diego, laying a marked emphasis upon the last word.

On Victoria's return to her apartment, she found herself so much fatigued by her little walk, that she was easily persuaded by madame Bourdaloue and Roselia to lie down to rest; when she soon fell into a gentle slumber, from which she awoke considerably refreshed; and, wishing to arise, looked around for Roselia to assist her; when she, to her utter dismay, beheld Bi-

anca in earnest conference with Jeanne. An exclamation of surprise from Victoria announced her being awake, and Bianca instantly approached her: but not like the same Bianca she had last seen; she was now humble, meek, and respectful even to servility.

The duchessa, Bianca now informed Victoria, had arrived in the last half-hour, and was so much shocked by hearing of lady Victoria's shipwreck and subsequent dangerous illness, that she had retired in great disorder to another apartment to recover herself, and had sent her to await the moment of her beloved niece's awaking, that she might then hasten and fold her in her fond arms.

Victoria shrunk with terror and disgust at the idea of an interview: but the duchessa was her honoured father's sister, and by him elected her guardian; and, repugnant as it was to her feelings, she thought she could not with propriety decline it. But too ingenuous to affect pleasure which she did not feel, she coldly said "she was ready to receive the duchessa di Manfredonia."

Bianca and Jeanne instantly after retired; and in a few moments Roselia entered and told our trembling heroine, that the duchessa had arrived during her slumber, and that nothing could equal her consternation on hearing who was in the château. "And who could wonder at her emotion?" continued Roselia. "She must tremble at the idea of seeing the dear persecuted innocent, whom her cruelty and injustice drove from her, to encounter perils unparalleled. She has been fortifying herself against the interview with a potent dose of laudanum; and was lady Victoria to take a little sal volatile, it would not be a wrong measure, I think."

Victoria followed Roselia's prescription, and called up all the forces of her mind to sustain her in the dreaded interview; for though her mind felt all the dignity and support of conscious rectitude, and that her own conduct could give birth to no unpleasant retrospections, yet the idea of meeting a woman who had, when last she saw her, stood high in her esteem and love, now so sunk and degraded in the opinion of her own niece, and of all the world, gave to

her delicate and feeling mind the most acute pain; nor could she divest herself of some apprehensions of being again delivered into the power of conte Vicenza by her perfidious guardian.

CHAP. XIII.

NEAR an hour of expectation had elapsed, when the duchessa appeared, leaning upon the arm of Bianca. Victoria arose at her entrance, but did not advance a single step to meet her. The duchessa, evidently in the utmost embarrassment, approached with tottering steps the spot where dignity and innocence immoveably stood, in the person of her interestingly lovely, though wan and languid niece, whom she folded to her bosom with a strong pressure, which she hoped might be mistaken for the ardent embrace of affection. Her air, and whole aspect, had now lost all that commanding superiority which had hitherto so conspicuously marked her manners and appearance. Humbled by the proclamation of her vices, she trembled in the august presence of virtue, and sunk abashed on the couch beside Victoria, a hand of whom she held fast locked within her own, and

whose altered countenance, recent illness, and late calamities, she deplored with all the exquisite feeling the most consummate art could teach her to assume; and eagerly she strove to overwhelm the resentment and remembrance of injury in Victoria's gentle bosom, by an impetuous torrent of tender speeches and caresses, and all the refined adulation of an accomplished parasite. But Victoria's acute perception, no longer clouded by partiality, soon penetrated through the veil of hypocrisy; and truly was she grieved to find each moment new causes for despising the woman she had long loved with filial fondness, and whom her dear deluded father had chosen for her guardian and her guide.

The duchessa continued about an hour with our heroine, during which time she had taken particular care that her eyes should never once encounter Victoria's; but with downcast looks she sat, fearing to meet the glances that might develop the secrets of her guilty soul.

Victoria was sad and unhappy after this painful interview, which by no means les-

sened her fears of her guardian's perfidy; so that when her dinner was served, to the great chagrin of Roselia, she could not eat: and that affectionate girl felt the most dreadful alarms, lest new agitation and disquiet should again subdue her beloved and persecuted lady.

Soon after dinner, Bianca brought word that the duchessa would take her coffee with Victoria; and very shortly after that diabolical woman made her appearance, with an air of infinitely less embarrassment than she had discovered in their first interview. When they had taken their coffee, and the domestics had retired, the duchessa entreated our heroine to gratify her by a recital of all that had befallen her since she had so fatally encountered the Pyrenean banditti. Victoria instantly complied, and artlessly, but energetically, recounted all the horrors and distresses she had met with, suppressing only those anecdotes which, by being repeated to conte Vicenza, might prove injurious to any one.

At some parts of this narrative the duchessa was really affected; at others, only

assumed the appearance of being so: and when Victoria ended her eventful tale, she clasped her to her bosom, emphatically congratulating her upon her providential escape from such unheard-of dangers and calamities; and fervently would she pray, she said, that the remainder of her adored and angelic niece's life might be marked only by exquisite happiness. "But, my Victoria, my sweet, seraphic, suffering child, tell me," she continued with a softened voice and insinuating smile, "who is this Hippolyto, this exalted hero of your interesting story?"

"I know nothing of his family, duchessa, or of his connexions: I found him, by some strange caprice of fortune, amongst the domestics of that horrid castle, and proved him to be possessed of every virtue under heaven."

"But my Victoria," replied the duchessa, putting on a look of archness, "by the emotion of her sweetly intelligent countenance, and by her animated energy of expression, whilst speaking of this wonderful young man, discovers to every atten-

tive observer that this being, 'possessed of every virtue under heaven,' is at least deficient in that very essential one called honesty."

Victoria started in amazement; and, with a bosom glowing with indignation at such an unjust aspersion, was hastening to vindicate her hero's fame, when the duchessa, with increased playfulness of looks and manner, continued—

"A breach of trust can be incontestably proved upon this very worthy monsieur Hippolyto; for, while the unsuspecting maid, trusting in his faith and honour, consigned herself to his protection, he insidiously and imperceptibly stole away her heart."

"Nay, now I see you are jesting, duchessa," Victoria replied gravely, while her before pallid cheeks were animated by the most glowing tint of vermilion.

"Serious, on my life!" said the duchessa.

"Heavens, duchessa! how could you suppose any thing so totally impossible? I should be insensible to the attractive power of virtue, to the sweet influence

of genuine gratitude, did I not estimate and admire Hippolyto with all the energy of enthusiasm; and although I give him my friendship, my esteem, my highest admiration, yet for me to give my heart to Hippolyto would surely be so very contrary to Nature's dictates, that I must ever consider it an utter impossibility:" and she bent her eyes to the ground, offended and confused.

"Why, so it would, my love, if Cupid had no influence over the operations of the mind. But surely, Victoria, you must (at least in theory) have long since known the attributes of the little urchin. Was Farinelli so very fastidious as never to permit your taking lessons from novels and romances?"

"Signora Farinelli certainly often allowed me to peruse such novels and romances as she herself approved of."

"And still so unlearned in the theory of love! Well then, my pretty novice, I must instruct you, and tell you all the properties of the blind boy, who is invested with full power to overcome all rationality in the human mind; to wage war with

Nature's self; to reign lord paramount over the optics, whose faculties he can at pleasure weaken or prevent; often sportively making his votaries blind to every imperfection, or deceiving, by the aid of his delusive perspectives, where every object appears perfect in beauty and virtue. And such contrary forms can he make every beloved object assume in the eyes of those he has ensnared, so effectually can he change black into white, and white into black, that it would be by no means extraordinary if Friendship, Admiration, and Gratitude had been taught by Love to lead you into his toils, and that in your eyes this negro should appear a rival to Adonis. Nay, so sure am I of my conjectures being well founded, that was Hippolyto to be led forth to be broken upon the wheel, for the murder of my lord——"

Victoria shrieked. "Just Heaven forbid!" she cried. "Oh! duchessa! what horrid phantom have you conjured up to terrify me? Hippolyto broken upon the wheel?—Hippolyto!—for murder! Why, surely, surely——" Her breathing became so

short and difficult she could not proceed. Fervently she grasped Elvira's hand, and eagerly looked up in her face with an air of supplication, terror, and anxiety: but instantly she dropped the duchessa's hand—a thrill of horror darted through her heart—for on her aunt's countenance conspicuously sat an expression of the most malignant satisfaction.

"Why this emotion, my sweet love?" returned the duchessa, evidently disconcerted at the marked withdrawing of Victoria's hand. "I did not say Hippolyto would suffer upon the wheel; it was only an hypothesis to prove my——"

"But though you did not *say* he would suffer," eagerly interrupted Victoria, "is there a probability, a possibility, of such a direful calamity?"

"I hope not," said Elvira coldly: "but conquer this at present unnecessary alarm." She paused. Victoria sickened, and fell back upon the couch; and, had not the duchessa quickly applied some restoratives, she must have fainted. To dispel her niece's apprehensions was next Elvira's

care; and she would have succeeded, had not a smile of mysteriousness accompanied all she said, which Victoria tremblingly observed: but, wishing for her aunt's absence, she affected to be composed, and the duchessa soon after departed for the night. As Victoria's narrative had necessarily taken up much time, it was then late. Roselia attended the moment Elvira retired, and strove, by every comforting suggestion, to alleviate the affliction and apprehensions of her lovely mistress, in whose feeling bosom the duchessa's words (but more her manner) had inflicted a wound that rankled dreadfully, forbidding sleep or peace: and the morning found her restless, unhappy, alarmed, and eagerly wishing for an interview with Hippolyto, to warn him of the dangers that might await him, should conte Vicenza's wound prove mortal; and more impatiently than ever did she long for the moment of her departure to St. Marguerite's. She had not found courage the preceding day to apprise the duchessa of her intended removal; and she was considering what method to pursue to gain her approbation to

this measure, when that perfidious woman unexpectedly entered her apartments, with the most winning softness in her whole deportment. After inquiring, with apparent maternal affection, how her beloved child had rested, she, with an engaging smile, continued:—

"I have had a long conference with the holy fathers Pierre and Anselmo this morning; when I had the severe mortification of learning from them, that my Victoria means to tear herself from me this very day."—Elvira paused, and Victoria faintly said—

"Considering that I had no longer a guardian, madam, I had so determined and arranged before your arrival."

"But now I am here," eagerly interrupted the duchessa, "you will not surely, my sweetest love, so precipitately desert me. Consider how very extraordinary it must appear to the domestics in this château, and indeed to all the world, were you to fly from hence the moment after my arrival."

Victoria found herself in possession of sufficient self-command to suppress a sar-

casm which forcibly suggested itself; but her eyes, not so amenable, darted a glance at the duchessa expressing more than language could convey. But, as a look demanded no reply, Elvira, though visibly disconcerted, hastily proceeded—

"I request nothing unreasonable; for I would not for worlds, in the delicate state my sweet child is in, contradict her wishes. All I solicit, my love, is, that you will postpone your intended departure for two or three days, when I will no longer oppose your leaving me; because," and a flush of crimson now deepened the rouge upon the duchessa's cheeks, "I shall then expect some guest, whom I should not approve of your meeting at present."

Victoria, guessing that it was De Montfort her aunt alluded to, was pleased to find she had still some respect to the delicacy of her ward's fame; and therefore, notwithstanding her great impatience to be gone, assented to Elvira's request, and begged the reverend fathers might be apprised of her retarded removal.

"I will settle that with father Pierre, who

is still here waiting to see his lovely patient," said the duchessa, who, embracing Victoria for her kind acquiescence, immediately departed; and soon after father Pierre was introduced, on whose countenance was visible a dark lower, or thoughtful gloom, quite unusual to it. His cheeks were flushed, as if from agitation; and when he addressed Victoria, it was with a forced smile, and in a tremulous voice. He found her pulse much quicker, and her health in no respect so good as it had been the preceding day; and with petulance he exclaimed—

"Why was I so infatuated as not to comply with your wish of removing to our holy sisters? The little journey could not have injured you half so much as the arrival of this diabolical woman has done. But if I find you are not more composed to-morrow, I will be arbitrary; and may the blessed saints forsake me, if I allow you longer to remain in a place not befitting innocence to dwell in!"

"I have certainly been much agitated since I saw you yesterday, good father."

"I wonder not that your delicate frame

and susceptible mind should be agitated by this shocking woman, since she possessed power to discompose me, whom religious habits have long taught to behold with indifference all human events, except the sufferings of my fellow-creatures. But, although she had power to disturb the serenity of my temper, she had it not to corrupt my principles; and finding that I was not to be won by her insidious arts, she has turned all her artillery against our brother Anselmo. But, gentle and docile as he appears, his virtue is incorruptible."

"You alarm me beyond measure, holy father! What new plot can my aunt have in agitation?"

"Fear not, my daughter. The monks of St. Lewis will protect you. The extent of her plot I know not; for, on perceiving by her preface that the work she was about was vile, my indignation would not suffer me to stay and hear further."

"I apprehend, good father, that there is some direful plot framing for the destruction of the amiable, gallant Hippolyto."

"There is something of that kind in her

head. She ordered him hither at an early hour this morning, and he has not since returned to St. Lewis."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Victoria in agony of soul, "my fears are verified, and she has given him to destruction."

"Be composed, my daughter. I saw and conversed with him when my indignation led me from the duchessa. He has no fears, and defies her malice; therefore has assented to her proposal for his remaining here."

"For the love of heaven, good father, entreat him not to stay, but immediately to fly from France; for, should conte Vicenza's wound prove mortal, his destruction would, I fear, be inevitable."

"See him yourself, my daughter. He agrees to stay here, from the hope of seeing you; for now, under the roof of your guardian, you need no longer scruple to grant him an interview. The duchessa has had a long conference with him. He is perfectly aware of her intentions, and has much to say to you upon the subject."

"I will see him then, if possible, this morning," Victoria said; and the monk

soon after took leave, promising to see her again next morning, and charging her to take some composing medicines which he would immediately send to her.

Shortly after the good monk's departure Roselia entered, and was truly grieved to find our heroine so agitated and unhappy.

"Oh!" said Roselia, "I wish we were safe out of this château, where I suppose there will be no peace for my dear lady. But do, dear lady Victoria, come and take a little walk. I am sure it will be of infinite service to you, the day is so pleasant; and monsieur Hippolyto said it would be the best thing you could do, and charged me to persuade you to it."

"What, then you have seen him, Roselia?"

"Yes, madam, and have had a long conversation with him. He was so very anxious to hear every particular about your health and spirits, and he has such a fascinating manner, that I should never have got away from him, only he was so eager that you should walk! I think monsieur Hippolyto could, if he pleased, draw every secret of my heart from me, even had I crimes to reveal; and

I am sure he could soon make me forget the colour of his complexion, particularly when I had constantly in my remembrance the loveliness of his deeds; and he certainly is the handsomest negro I ever beheld His figure is the finest, and his eyes and teeth the most beautiful I almost ever saw. His eyes have nothing of that savage fierceness which has ever terrified me in other black people; although, indeed, I thought nothing less than lightning had flashed from them when I told him how very miserable lady Victoria was, so miserable about him, that she could take neither food nor rest since she had reason to fear his safety would be in danger should conte Vicenza's wound prove mortal. But in a moment after his eyes assumed the tenderness and softness of a dove's; and he was so grieved that you should suffer any alarm upon his account, that he entreated me to prevail upon you to let him see you on the terrace, that he may assure you he has nothing to apprehend. And wo'n't you, wo'n't you, lady Victoria, go?

Victoria was soon equipped for her walk, and was just upon the point of leaving her

apartment, when Bianca made her unwished-for appearance, who came to desire Victoria would immediately attend the duchessa in an airing. Our much chagrined heroine wished to excuse herself, but in vain, as father Pierre had ordered her to be taken out in an open carriage; and the duchessa, Bianca said, had desired one to be got ready on purpose for lady Victoria's accommodation.

CHAP. XIV.

UNWILLINGLY now our heroine descended the staircase, leaning upon the arm of Roselia, whom she desired to inform Hippolyto of her disappointment, and to assure him she would see him in the evening. In the hall they were met by the duchessa, who conducted her reluctant niece to the carriage, where she was agreeably surprised to find father Anselmo already seated.

They continued their airing about two hours, during which time the conversation found no other theme than the perfections of Hippolyto. Motives of delicacy kept Victoria silent upon the subject; but the monk and Elvira seemed absolutely charmed to enthusiasm by his conduct and manners, and appeared to find the highest pleasure in talking of this phænomenon, as they termed him. On their return to the château

Victoria found herself so subdued by fatigue, that she could not comply with the duchessa's wish for her dining with her, but was compelled to retire to her chamber to take some rest; and while she was taking her coffee after dinner, Roselia alone attended, whose countenance betrayed a perturbation and anxiety which Victoria eagerly inquired the reason of.

"I shall not be comfortable or happy," Roselia replied, "until lady Victoria has left this château. Oh, how I wish we were safe with the good Benedictines!"

"What new cause have you for wishing it?" said Victoria in alarm.

"Because I every hour like less and less the conduct of the duchessa. Such repeated conferences with Bianca and Marati can bode no good to any one."

"Heaven defend us! Is Marati then here? What, what can be the meaning of my aunt's bringing her steward with her to the comte de Montfort's château?"

"The duchessa, like a sorceress, cannot move without her familiar; and Heaven forgive me if I wrong them, lady Victoria;

but I do think they are both familiar with crimes."

"From my earliest days," said Victoria, "I have trembled at the sight of Maratti. He ever appeared to me like a being who had fed through life upon human calamities; and in his age, with the furrows time had traced upon his brow, was clearly told the food that had nourished him, with evident symptoms of an insatiable appetite for more. I never beheld him, but treason, cruelty, and murder, arose to my appalled imagination; and if he is engaged in any plot against us we well may tremble."

"I know nothing, my dear lady, but that there has been much consultation amongst them; and that when I was returning from the terrace, after delivering your message to monsieur Hippolyto, I met Bianca and Maratti coming out of the wood in deep and earnest discourse. On seeing me they started in evident confusion, and instantly became silent, whilst they regarded me with a suspicious and inquisitive eye."

Victoria's mind now imbibed all the ap-

prehensions of Roselia, in addition to her own; and, much alarmed and perplexed, she instantly resolved to hasten her interview with Hippolyto, that she might persuade him to immediate flight, and consult with him upon the measures she should take to effect her own safety. Roselia she therefore dispatched to summon Hippolyto into the grounds; and she was equipping herself for her walk, when the duchessa, with strong symptoms of wildness and despair in her countenance and deportment, suddenly rushed into the room, and flung herself into a seat without uttering a single word.

"Merciful heaven! what can have thus agitated my aunt?" exclaimed our astonished and alarmed heroine.

The duchessa made no reply, but sat with her hands clasped, and her eyes fixed with the immoveable gaze of soul-harrowing despair. Victoria trembled. At length, deep groans burst from Elvira's bosom, and she articulated, in the most piteous tones of grief, short sentences, interrupted only by convulsive sobs and sighs.

" Poor, poor, ill-fated Polydore!—Yes, I did once adore you! Infidelity, perjury, and unkindness are now wiped from my remembrance. Oh, oh, my Polydore! my affection is revived; and oh, my heart! my bursting heart! keenly, deeply, I deplore your untimely, cruel fate."

Victoria's vital warmth chilled to its source; and she shook with terror. Catching Elvira's hand, feebly she demanded—" Is conte Vicenza dead?"

" Yes," exclaimed the duchessa, roughly flinging our heroine's trembling hand from her, and starting from her seat with terrifying wildness, " yes, *your deliverer* murdered him."

Victoria, clasping her hands in speechless agony, cast an eloquent look of reproach at her aunt, and sunk into a chair almost deprived of respiration. The duchessa snatched her to her breast—" Forgive my phrensy, my love, my child, my all I have now in life to rest upon. Look up, revive, my darling, and forgive your distracted parent. Adoring Polydore as I once did, can the feeling tender heart of my Victoria con-

demn or wonder at my agony, my distraction, at his dreadful fate; but shook as I am to the vitals of sensibility, do not believe that *I* accuse the gallant Hippolyto of murder."

"Who, who does?" wildly Victoria demanded, shrinking from the ardent embraces of her aunt.

"Be composed, my lovely, my adored child. All may yet be well. We may have the power still to rescue him from the hands of justice."

"Then he is accused," faltered out Victoria, almost annihilated by horror.

"Alas! my child, it is too true. Polydore's sanguinary relations have done it. The dreadful account of my husband's death, and Hippolyto's attainder, reached me by the same horrid messengers—no less than those wretches who feed on human woes, called officers of justice, who have traced the unfortunate Hippolyto hither, and are come to drag him to his fate in the Bastile."

Victoria, almost screaming with grief and dismay, sunk upon her knees at the

duchessa's feet; and as well as the anguish of her heart would permit, supplicated Elvira to save Hippolyto.

"Already, my love, have I done something towards it; for when Maratti disclosed the dreadful tidings to me, I had Hippolyto privately conducted to a remote chamber in the château, where he is now locked in, and the key in my possession; but, alas! this can avail us little, since the messengers have the king's warrant to search every part of the château and the neighbourhood."

"Well," said Victoria, suddenly catching a glimpse of comfort in the moment of despair, "and if Hippolyto is brought to trial he must be acquitted. I was the only witness upon the dreadful occasion, and my single testimony will prove his innocence."

"Alas, my child! you talk like an artless being, unskilled in the wickedness of this depraved world. Power can ever in France silence justice. Conte Vicenza's friends are powerful and numerous: poor Hippolyto is a stranger and friendless."

"My preserver cannot want numerous

and powerful friends while the illustrious family of Ariosto live," said Victoria haughtily.

" Certainly, was your brother here; but you forget how many leagues distance he is from hence, and not now the master of his own time; and you are not aware, my love, of the corruption practised in the Bastile: Hippolyto, on the instant of his arrival there, may be brought to trial, and execution may take place on the moment of condemnation."

Victoria, bursting into an agony of tears, again, with all the energy her ardent feelings inspired, supplicated the duchessa to befriend Hippolyto.

" Should I conceal Hippolyto," said Elvira, " and screen him from the fangs of justice, should I not irreparably injure my own fame, and criminate myself. It was but too generally known the unhappy terms on which my late lord and I for a length of time lived; and were I to protect his murderer, as Hippolyto is unjusty denominated, what would the world say of me?"

" Alas! I know not," replied Victoria,

" what the world might *say ;* but I should *think* the man who repeatedly hazarded his life to deliver your orphan niece from the cruel atrocious plot formed to destroy her every hope of happiness merited at least protection from you, who solemnly promised my father, in the last moments of his life, to be my guardian, my guide, a fostering parent to me ; and think, think, duchessa, that still from high my anxious father, your tender friend and brother, narrowly observes you, to see how well, how conscientiously, you execute the sacred trust he confided to your care."

The countenance of the duchessa underwent a marked variety of changes during this short speech, emphatically delivered. Shame, guilt, and irresolution, were conspicuously blended, with other disguised expressions of dark and mysterious meaning. At length, after an interesting pause, during which Victoria keenly observed her, it suddenly assumed the character of cold and stern inflexibility—and, with a voice which proclaimed her steady to her purpose, she said—

" Unnecessary is further entreaty; since it is in your appropriate power, and yours alone, to save Hippolyto from an immediate and an ignominious death."

" In mine!" exclaimed the dreadfully agitated and astonished Victoria: "explain; name but the means, that I may fly to secure his safety."

An awful pause ensued, which at length the duchessa broke, in a quick, but hollow, tone.

" Promise, solemnly promise, as your soul hopes to find eternal peace hereafter in the realms of endless bliss, with both your virtuous parents, to become to-morrow morning the wife of Hippolyto. Promise this to me, and the prosecution against his life shall instantly cease. I am authorised to tell you so."

Victoria, with a look of mingled amazement and contempt, arose from the duchessa's feet; and, calmly taking a seat opposite to her, after a short interval of silence, in which her intelligent countenance eloquently expressed her feelings, she spoke with dignity and firmness.

" I am, 'tis true, but young in years; and in knowledge of the world much younger still; yet I am not so much a child, or so great a novice in the machinery which actuates human views and human events, not clearly to perceive that my becoming the wife of Hippolyto cannot be the project of conte Vicenza's relations, unless to cut off my evidence, which can be of consequence, if my marriage with him is to save him from persecution; and such inconsistency must lead me to believe that no sanguinary plot has been formed against Hippolyto by conte Vicenza's friends. Ah, no! this most extraordinary and inexplicable project has, alas! I fear been the work of those who ought to blush at forming or combining in any plots inimical to the interest or happiness of the late conte Ariosto's child. But let me take the liberty of requesting the duchessa di Manfredonia to inform those who employed her upon an embassy so disgraceful to her, and insulting to me, that Victoria di Modena feels most properly her obligations for the alliance so suited to her birth, which with such pa-

rental tenderness they have endeavoured to form for her; but that highly as she estimates the virtues and services of Hippolyto, enthusiastic as she owns her gratitude and admiration are, she is not to be duped by such a puerile plot, or terrified into a marriage with a stranger, whose birth, connexions, or history, are unknown to her. But even were she, in the enthusiasm of her gratitude, so far to forget the dignity of that illustrious house from which she sprung as to accede to such a degrading proposition, the duchessa di Manfredonia, feeling, as she must feel, the duty of a guardian, would oppose so improper an alliance, and, in respect and gratitude to her late brother's memory, exert her utmost power to save his child from ruin and his house from dishonour."

"Are these your real sentiments?" said the duchessa, almost suffocating with rage.

"They are," replied Victoria with firmness. "My fears upon Hippolyto's account are now dissipated, and the influence of terror no longer destroys the faculties of judgment. The story of conte Vicenza's

death I must believe a phantom, conjured up to delude; and feel convinced, that no one dares, or has the power, to touch the life of Hippolyto."

"Your residence, child, in the castle of the Pyrenean brigands has certainly deranged your intellects," said the duchessa, endeavouring to appear composed.

"No, duchessa," Victoria replied; "my early acquaintance with misery and misfortune has arranged my intellects, to see, with optics much too clear for my repose, cruel foes in those whom by nature and law I had a right to claim protection from:" and her voice faltering as she approached her period, she burst into tears.

"Well," said Elvira, with the voice, gestures, and countenance of baleful implacable revenge—"well, and since you have learned to see your foes, learn also to beware their vengeance for your insults. What they have threatened they dare perform; and whether you choose to admit the authenticity of conte Vicenza's *murder* or not, your deliverer, whom you thus *gratefully* abandon to his fate, is in the hands of those

whom your sagacity terms your foes ; and you may prepare your crystalline optics to view him, ere many hours ensue, distended upon the wheel of torture a bleeding mangled corpse, sentenced to that doom by you for whom he did so much. The officers of justice are within call, and dare, and have the power, to lead him to immediate execution."

Terror and grief again assailed Victoria with accumulated torture from this short suspension ; and she threw herself once more, in all the agony of the most acute mental suffering, at the duchessa's feet, to implore and plead ; but that diabolical woman, spurning her thence, instantly arose, and, with the ghastly smile of malignant triumph, said—

" I once told you the only means of saving the life of your preserver, and of crowning him with riches, honours, happiness ; but the imperious and penetrating Victoria di Modena rejected not only with scorn and indignation, but with insult to those whose power she braved and doubted ; and soon shall she have cause to thank her own err-

ing and haughty spirit for accelerating a calamity that only threatened at a distance; for before this hour to-morrow she shall be presented with fatal proof, that there are those who have power, and were dared by her, to touch the life of Hippolyto." Then, with stern vengeance on her brow, and swift-winged malice brooding in her brain, she rushed out of the apartment. Victoria would have followed, to promise every thing to insure Hippolyto's safety, but she possessed not power to move; and extended upon the floor in a state of agitation almost too much for her fragile frame to sustain was she found in some time after by Roselia, who, as well as her concern and alarm would permit, exerted herself to compose the lovely sufferer.

By broken sentences and apostrophes that burst from Victoria, Roselia soon learned the cause of her agonising perturbation, and deeply felt the cruelty of her situation, without being able to afford her any advice or consolation. Her gratitude to, and admiration of, Hippolyto were extreme; and she could not endure the thoughts of any

evil befalling him; nor yet could she brook the dreadful idea of her beautiful, accomplished, and high-born lady becoming the wife of an obscure negro. All poor Roselia could do, then, was to heave sigh for sigh, and shed tear for tear, with her afflicted lady, and to unite with her in prayers to Heaven for succour.

At length Victoria thought of Diego, who had proved himself such an able and willing friend to her. "Go, dear Roselia," said she, "and bring my good Diego to me. He will extricate me from this state of horror, if sense, prudence, attachment, and courage can do it."

Roselia hung her head in evident embarrassment. Victoria caught new alarm; and Roselia hastened to inform her that Diego was no longer in the château. "That," said she, "was amongst my reasons, to-day, for wishing us removed to St. Marguerite's; but I did not like to tell you all my causes of alarm at once. Francis informed me that the duchessa, thinking the illness which still hangs about Diego is a disordered mind, sent him early this morning to the Carthu-

sian convent, for the monks to reason him into health; nor would she permit him to see you before his departure, although he earnestly supplicated for that indulgence."

"Was Diego's benefit her real motive, I should thank her for his removal; but, alas! I fear it was solely to deprive me of the only friend who could assist me now;" and bitterly she wept at the peculiar forlornness of her situation, and at the confirmation of evil which Diego's secret removal but too plainly told.

"But, my dear lady," said the sympathising Roselia, "weep not for this. St. Lewis's is within our reach; and, if you think Diego's presence can afford you even one gleam of comfort, I will myself bring him to you."

Victoria thankfully and eagerly accepted the offer of Roselia, who instantly set out to bring, if possible, father Pierre as well as Diego to the château; and during the interval of her absence, the mind of our heroine was agitated with so many painful emotions, such quick transitions of hopes and fears, that we cannot attempt the deli-

neation of her feelings. At length Roselia, chagrined and sad, appeared alone.

" What," said Victoria mournfully, " and would they not come to me?"

" Alas, lady Victoria! I have not been at the convent at all. I got out of the château, as I thought, without observation; and had run about half-way to St. Lewis's when Maratti overtook me, and savagely dragged me back to the château, in spite of all my struggles and remonstrances; and in my hearing he has given orders to the porter not to let me out of the château until he gives leave. But the worst part of my story is," continued she, bursting into tears, " that just as we approached the house I saw that wretch Bianca emerging from a thick part of the wood, in earnest conference with two men, with whom she entered the château by a private door. I had a full view of the men; and they so much resembled bravos, that I am certain they are come upon some sanguinary purpose."

" Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Victoria, in an agony of grief and consternation, " then Hippolyto's life is too truly in danger, and

if I longer hesitate it may be too late to save him. Would to heaven that I could see father Pierre! he would act, would think for me. Run, fly, Roselia, to Francois; dispatch him to the convent; tell him I am taken dangerously ill, and must this instant see the holy father. It is no untruth, my Roselia, for I am sick at heart. Persuade, bribe Francois to go immediately, if you love me, Roselia."

Roselia instantly disappeared; and Victoria, in a dreadful tumult of spirits, sunk upon her knees, and fervently implored the protection of heaven for Hippolyto. In about twenty minutes Roselia returned, pale, trembling, breathless.

"Heaven defend us!" exclaimed Victoria, alarmed almost to phrensy, "what does this evident dismay portend?"

"Oh, poor monsieur Hippolyto!" faintly articulated Roselia, her teeth smiting each other as she spoke: "alas, what is become of him!"

"Torture me not to madness by this suspense," exclaimed Victoria: "tell me,

I conjure you, tell me all that has occasioned this dreadful agitation."

"On going from hence," replied Roselia, whose excessive tremor scarcely allowed her power to speak, and she was forced to pause between every sentence, "I had just reached the top of a staircase, when on the first landing below me I caught a glimpse of Maratti in deep consultation with those horrid men I saw with Bianca. I instantly stopped and crouched down, with a hope of hearing what they were talking about, but not one word reached me. At last they all began to descend the staircase; and so did I, still keeping them in view, but continuing at a proper distance for concealment. At length they turned into a long dark passage, which I knew led to the part of the château where Jeanne told me monsieur Hippolyto is confined. Terrified for him, I instantly resolved to follow them. I did so, cautiously, led on by the sound of their footsteps, and crept after them upon my hands and knees, to prevent my being seen, up a small staircase, where once I was quite sure I was detected, as I

thought, when Maratti turned suddenly round, that his eyes rested upon mine; but fortunately I was mistaken, for on he went with his companions, until they reached a gallery leading to several chambers, where they stopped; and after I had concealed myself behind a pillar of the first doorcase I came to, I saw Maratti take a dagger from his bosom and present it to one of the men; when distinctly I heard him say, although he spoke in a cautious whisper, 'The point is touched with a quick and subtile poison, and will do this business effectually.—'"

Victoria's senses sickened, and she almost ceased to respire. "Go on," said she, panting with horrid expectation.

"——Then pointing to a door," continued Roselia, "'That is the chamber of your victim,' said the sanguinary wretch; 'and immediately after the convent bell tolls at one, send his black soul to join his kindred devils.'"

"'This mode,' said one of the bravos in the most soul-harrowing voice I ever heard, 'this mode will spare us the trouble of drag-

ging him to the Bastile, and the ceremony of trial; but would it not afford more ample vengeance to the widow of the conte to see her husband's murderer broke alive upon the rack.'"

"'Why no,' returned Maratti;' her niece is under obligations to him, and the duchessa would therefore spare him the pangs of torture, and sends him a lifeless body to be crushed upon the wheel.'"

"'But why may we not dispatch him now?' said the other assassin; 'there is no one to observe us.'

"'Because,' replied Maratti, 'that it is the duchessa's pleasure to have the deed perpetrated after midnight, when all eyes and ears will be closed by sleep, and when, unobserved, you can convey the body hence; but in the intermediate time, lest any one should hold intercourse with him, you must keep watch here, with loaded pistols, and seize all who approach his chamber;' and he then opened the door of a room contiguous to that in which was confined the poor devoted monsieur, through which they all cautiously entered,—and I returned hither."

CHAP. XV.

VICTORIA was now almost convulsed by horror and despair. "So, then," she wildly exclaimed, "he is given up to destruction; and I, vile ungrateful wretch that I am, I sealed the doom of my gallant preserver—of Hippolyto; but do not, do not, cruel Roselia, tell me it is too late to save him. I will brave his assassins. I will fly to him; I will alarm the house, the neighbourhood. Alas! alas! what will that avail me, but to accelerate his murder? Hippolyto's murder!"—she shrieked, she burst into the bitterest tears of agonising horror and despair. Her tears restored her fleeting senses. She wept abundantly, and her mental powers at length resumed their functions.

"Roselia," said Victoria after a painful pause, "a woman so deeply versed in crimes as the duchessa must surely be so in stratagems, and she yet can save Hippolyto from these fiends of civil law. Fly then to her,

Roselia, if you love me, and promise all things for me that can save Hippolyto. But stay; your word may be doubted, it may not be deemed sufficiently decisive, and I had better render my promise indisputable." Hastily our agitated heroine snatched up a pen, and with much difficulty traced a few almost illegible lines addressed to the duchessa di Manfredonia.

"Nothing can save the life of Hippolyto but my complying with the wishes of my guardian, I have been told by her. Truly would I yield my life, my liberty, my all of happiness, to save him. Solemnly, then, I promise to become his wife to-morrow. Unmurmuring will I accede to any proposition that can secure him from destruction."

"VICTORIA DI MODENA."

With this almost unintelligible billet she instantly dispatched the trembling Roselia, the moments of whose absence were not so miserable to Victoria as those she had passed for the last few hours. She had now, she conceived, performed her duty to gratitude and humanity, and she felt almost com-

posed, and comparatively happy; for well she knew that, whatever were the mysterious motives which inspired Elvira's wishes for this extraordinary union, they were so powerful, that she would eagerly embrace her acquiescence, and exert herself to extricate Hippolyto from danger. Her expectations soon were verified; for, as quickly as possible, Roselia returned with the following answer from the duchessa.

"Every apprehension for Hippolyto's safety may cease from this moment; nor let a fear obtrude of his being repugnant to, or intimidated into, the projected union.

"Be ready at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, attended by Roselia, to accompany me to the church of St. Lewis, where we shall be received by the enraptured Hippolyto and the pious father Anselmo, who shall perform the nuptial benediction. After the awful ceremony you will all return to the château, to give me the pleasure of your company at breakfast; but at twelve I shall wish your long projected journey to St. Marguerite's to take place, and where I

would have you continue until my plans for your future establishment are arranged.

"ELVIRA MANFREDONIA VICENZA."

Victoria perused this billet, which seemed to fix her doom, with astonishing composure; nay, with a kind of heroic satisfaction caught from the reflexion, that, although she was to be the sacrifice, she would evince the greatness of her gratitude, and save, in her turn, the life of her amiable preserver. But not so composed was Roselia; for bitterly she wept at the sacrifice that deep ploting art and cruelty had forced her lovely mistress to make, who now, to reconcile poor Roselia to Fate's inevitable decree, entered into a more minute detail of all that had occurred to her, from the commencement of her captivity until the moment of her taking shelter in comte de Montfort's château, than she had heretofore done;—and when her narrative was ended, she found her own mind charmed to enthusiasm by a retrospection of Hippolyto's virtues, and calm and contented at the prospect of their intended union; while Roselia, almost as

much delighted with the heroism of her lady's preserver, felt a considerable abatement of reluctance to the proposed marriage; nay, would have been absolutely pleased at the event (although she herself had been forming, in her wishes, an alliance for Victoria) could Hippolyto but change the tint of his complexion.

Victoria's narrative brought the night almost to its termination; when Roselia recollected that it was necessary to make some arrangement for her lady's dress the subsequent morning; but small was the scope her fancy had to select the bridal garments from, as it was her own wardrobe that was to supply them, as it had already done Victoria's dress since her shipwreck; our heroine having had no opportunity to purchase a wardrobe of her own, or to get any thing belonging to her from conte Vicenza's château. With a heavy heart Roselia now prepared her own best cambric gown and the prime of all her linen for her beloved lady, who could not but sensibly feel the mortification of her own fortune and extraordinary situation. Where was now the nuptial

pomp which Fate had promised to conte Ariosto's daughter? Reared up in all the splendid luxury of rank and brilliant expectations, she now was doomed, by the villany of her guardian, to be indebted to her own domestic for her bridal garments, and forced into a clandestine union with an obscure man, a stranger to herself and family. She felt herself the outcast of her house, a victim to the crimes of others; and, with tears of anguish, she bitterly deplored her cruel destiny, until her genuine piety arose to hush her murmurs, and to lead her mind to fortitude and resignation. She wiped her tears away, and a soft, but melancholy smile, again diffused its plaintive sweetness over her interesting lovely countenance.

The château clock at length struck one. Victoria started in horror, and her varying cheeks hung out the ghastly ensigns of fear. Roselia, too, was infected by alarm. The convent bell struck up a dismal knell. It had been the signal for murder—for Hippolyto's murder. Had the diabolical decree been revoked? Perhaps the duchessa's billet was only a delusion to lull apprehension?

Victoria breathed short; her heart throbbed with painful violence. She grasped Roselia's arm. She could not speak; but Roselia perfectly understood her meaning, and, instantly taking up a light—

"Be composed, my dear lady," said she. "I will go see that all is safe; and watch by his door until morning."

Roselia moved to go, and Victoria, continuing her grasp, moved with her.

"Does lady Victoria mean to accompany me?"

"I do," Victoria falteringly articulated: "These bravos might murder you too, my Roselia, did not I appear to protect you; and how could I support the interval of suspense, uncertain of your fate, as well as his?"

"Well then," said Roselia, striving to wear the appearance of cheerfulness foreign to her heart, as she gently opened the door, "should we meet any of the family, we can tell them you walk the house at this unseasonable hour through a rash vow you made the night of your shipwreck."

Softly and tremulously they trod the way to Hippolyto's chamber. On entering the gallery leading to it their fears increased to tortures. Every sensation of horror Victoria had experienced in Don Manuel's castle now assailed her with renovated force; and when, on approaching the chamber which Roselia pointed to as Hippolyto's, she saw the door of it open, no words can express the anguish of her heart, and, subdued by agonising apprehension, she sunk almost breathless upon the floor. Roselia, more herself, rushed impetuously into the room, which now was vacant. Minutely she searched around. No Hippolyto—no trace of murder could she see, and concluded that the duchessa was faithful to her promise, and that he was returned to St. Lewis, to be there in readiness for the morning's awful ceremony.

Her conjectures and intelligence Roselia hastily communicated to Victoria, who, revived and comforted, arose from the ground, and, supported by Roselia, looked into the room, to convince herself the affectionate

girl's statement was just. In turning from this now deserted chamber, Roselia observed the door of the room, into which Maratti had conducted the bravos, a-jar. Her wish to tranquillise her beloved lady's mind lent her courage, and she instantly entered to search that also. She found it to be an unoccupied bed-room, and in it she quickly discovered a dagger lying on a table, which she conjectured was that she had seen Maratti give to the assassins. Carefully she examined the point; and finding it to all appearance guiltless of blood, she flew with it to Victoria, who hoped it was a proof that the fatal deed had not been perpetrated; but fearing to leave it there, she took it from Roselia, and carried it with her to her own chamber, which they reached unmolested—still in painful anxiety respecting the fate of Hippolyto. There was nothing to confirm their hopes of his being gone back to the convent. Might he not have been removed to some more secret part of the château; and might not the assassin be supplied with other weapons of death beside that she had found. These ideas gave birth to so many new

horrors, that Roselia proposed going to learn from Jeanne if Hippolyto was really returned to St. Lewis.

"It is very probable that Jeanne knows," continued she, "and if she does I know she will tell me; but, before I go, I must prevail upon my dear lady to take some of this composing medicine." She now took up a phial which had been sent late in the evening from St. Lewis; and while, according to usual custom, she was shaking it preparatory to pouring it out, a paper fell to the ground which had been warily concealed within the label. Roselia, no longer mindful of the medicine she had been about to administer, hastily picked up what she saw was a written paper, and, with infinite satisfaction, read aloud:—

"The best composing medicine which we can administer to our interesting patient before her hour of rest, is an assurance that her preserver, Hippolyto, is returned in safety to our convent, where, in perfect security, he will pass this night; and let our daughter come to the church of St. Lewis to-morrow morning with confidence and

hope, since there, through the mercy of Heaven, she will find a termination to all her cruel persecutions, and permanent protection from her guilty foes."

Victoria found this a balm that distilled sweet peace and comfort to her tortured heart and agitated spirits; and after paying her just tribute of thanksgiving to her merciful Creator, and invoking his future protection, she, with Roselia, who slept in the same room, retired to rest. When Roselia laid her head upon her pillow, it was in the firm hope that the billet from the convent implied the intervention of something to prevent the union she was so averse to; and Victoria fell into a tranquil slumber, in the firm belief that whatever heaven decrees is for the ultimate good of its creatures, who ought not only to meet its wise dispensations with resignation, but with gratitude.

Between six and seven Roselia sprung from her bed to assist her lovely mistress in dressing for the solemn event which was fast approaching. But Victoria would not dedicate much time to the task of adorning, having what she considered a much more

important business to settle with her Creator. Yet, notwithstanding her inattention to her appearance, she looked, in the simple and unstudied garments of Roselia, most interestingly lovely; while, in despite of her reliance upon heaven, a tear of reluctance glistened in her eyes, and a flush of timid awful apprehension animated her cheeks.

The hour which the duchessa had appointed for meeting was nearly arrived, when Victoria recollected the picture she had, with her own trinkets, brought in her pockets from Don Manuel's castle; and, without bestowing one parting look upon it, lest it should prove to the disadvantage of Hippolyto, she folded it in several papers, which she carefully sealed, resolving never more to behold it, and, on the first possible opportunity, to restore it to its owner; as now voluntarily to retain it in her possession she considered would be a crime against the man whom she was so shortly to plight her vows to; and giving it to Roselia, she directed her to put it up with those things they purposed taking to St. Marguerite's with them.

A few moments before eight Bianca re-

quested admission, at sight of whom Victoria's firmness almost entirely forsook her. She had ever disliked Bianca; but her having so cruelly consigned her amiable sister Octavia to the murderer's power had converted that dislike into detestation, and she now beheld her as the harbinger of evil. She came to announce, that the duchessa was waiting for Victoria in the wood leading to St. Lewis.

Our trembling heroine, leaning on the arm of the trembling Roselia, followed Bianca to a private path in the wood, where the duchessa and Maratti were waiting. At the sight of these execrable fiends, Victoria's fears and agitations dreadfully augmented, nor was Elvira without her share of visible emotion. She spoke not; but, taking the chilled and passive hand of her devoted victim from Roselia, drew it through her own arm; and silently and gloomily they were conducted by Maratti to the convent church, where they were all instantly admitted by a lay-brother, and received by father Anselmo, who led them in awful silence to the altar; where stood Hippolyto, plainly but

elegantly attired, attended by poor Thomas, and as much agitated as his destined bride.

The duchessa, in a hurried and hollow voice, bade father Anselmo proceed; and the moment Victoria beheld Hippolyto placed by her side, and heard the holy father pronounce the first words of the nuptial ceremony, her recollection totally forsook her, and she saw not the agitation of Hippolyto, or the guilty working of her perfidious guardian's countenance. She heard not the hysteric sobbings of poor Roselia, nor the marriage benediction, firmly and piously delivered by the devout father Anselmo: nor did she clearly comprehend any thing that was passing until after the awful ceremony was ended, and the vestry business completed; when, returning through the wood, and the gentle breeze of the morning, the well-known soothing voice of Hippolyto recalled her to perception, as he tenderly supported her to the château, whither the duchessa had invited him and father Anselmo to accompany them.

CHAP. XVI.

When Victoria recovered her senses sufficiently to know her doom was fixed, and that she was irrevocably the wife of Hippolyto, she would have found considerable relief by indulging in a flood of tears that was forcing its passage to calm her agitated breast; but reflecting that tears, by implying a repugnance to their union, might wound the feelings of her generous, gallant deliverer, she exerted her utmost endeavours to restrain them; and effectually to do so, she knew she must not attempt to speak; and therefore continued silent to all the soothing tenderness of Hippolyto, who led her to the saloon, where an elegant breakfast was prepared, and where he seated himself beside her; but still she spoke not, fearing the effect might subdue the little share of firmness she had acquired.

The duchessa had, with father Anselmo, taken a seat at some distance from the sad bride, evidently uncomfortable in her own hypocritical task, and heartily repenting the difficult and disagreeable part she had given herself to perform, by not having arranged for her niece's departure to St. Marguerite's immediately after the nuptial ceremony had been pronounced; but as she had undertaken the part, she exerted herself to sustain it, with all that consummate art she was mistress of; and, with a countenance of perfect ease and an air that spoke unconsciousness of guilt, she calmly fell into conversation with the holy man.

At length Roselia entered with a glass of sal volatile and water, which she presented to Victoria, who, on beholding the pretty and intelligent countenance of Roselia swelled and disfigured with excessive weeping for her, burst into tears, which continued to flow for some minutes before she could collect sufficient mental power to subdue them; when, eagerly swallowing the sal volatile, and hastily wiping away the crystal drops, she turned to Hippolyto with a soft

bewitching smile, and looked upon him for the first time since their union.

" Think not, Hippolyto," she said—and low and tremulously she spoke—" think not that I weep because I am your wife. No, believe me; it is the manner of our union that distresses me, that wounds my heart, my every feeling of delicacy, to the very quick."

Roselia, through respect and fearing to trust her firmness in hearing more, hastily retreated; and Hippolyto, affected almost to tears, took Victoria's hand, on which he had so lately placed the little token of their plighted vows, and with the most impassioned energy he spoke—

" And believe me, lady Victoria, the man to whom your vows were given, when wrested from you, is not villain enough to refuse the restoration of these compulsatory vows the moment you demand them. The laws of this country (defective as they are) can never consider those vows binding which are extorted by terror and compassion from a minor; and it will therefore be in your own power, at a future period, to an-

nul this marriage, should I prove so unfortunate as to find such your wish; and I should not, believe me, have submitted by passiveness to become a party in this cruel plot of torturing and working upon the most exquisite feelings of susceptibility, but to extricate you from the power and machinations of those whom I well knew were unworthy of the valuable trust reposed in their honour. No other method was mine of wresting you from inevitable destruction; and though harsh my remedy, perhaps you may forgive me, when you shall learn how deep was the source from which my conduct sprung."

Victoria heard Hippolyto with that candour he so justly merited, and fully was she convinced that it never could be her wish to give him one moment of uneasiness; and she was about to speak what a sweet expressive smile anticipated, when Elvira summoned them to the breakfast table.

The bride and bridegroom were merely spectators of the repast; although our heroine's mental strength seemed each moment to augment, and she appeared serene

and resigned, if not happy. Hippolyto's (now her attentive observer) tenderness, respect, and admiration, strongly marked his manners to her; while to the duchessa his deportment was visibly tinctured with contempt and aversion, which his situation could not justify, nor his politeness even conceal.

Breakfast was ended, and the domestics just departed, when one of them hastily returned and announced the arrival of comte de Montfort.

The expression that instantly diffused itself over the duchessa's countenance was difficult to define. It seemed openly to evince shame, mortification, and chagrin, blended with a mysterious kind of satisfaction ill according with the revealed emotions of her face. In the moment of surprise she lost her usual self-possession, and hastily exclaimed—

"Heavens! how unlucky! Let him not come hither."

"The comte is already here," said the domestic, throwing the door wide open. "My lord has just entered the antichamber."

Elvira started from her seat, and, with a hurrying emotion of her hand, pointed to another door. "Holy father," said she, "will you and Hippolyto have the goodness to retire for a few moments into that room; I will hereafter assign reasons for this request, that will excuse the liberty I take."

They instantly complied with her wishes, and the door closed upon them at the moment De Montfort entered the saloon.

Victoria's delicacy bade her depart, and she had hastily arisen to go, but the duchessa insisted upon her stay.

Comte de Montfort advanced with an empassioned air to Elvira, and gallantly took her hand; but at that moment perceiving Victoria, he flung the duchessa's hand in horror from him; and, pale and trembling, he for some moments stood gazing in speechless amazement.

"Gracious powers!" he at length exclaimed, "and do I indeed behold lady Victoria di Modena?" He rapidly advanced towards her, then suddenly stopping, hung his head in shame and sorrow, and, reproachfully addressing Elvira, he con-

tinued—"Oh! duchessa, why, why did you tell me that she was lost to my eager pursuit for ever; that she was gone, by her own express desire, to take the veil in a convent far distant, the name and situation of which you had solemnly vowed never to disclose, until it was too late for your profligate husband to trepan her into his power?—and yet I see her here, and not even in the habit of a noviciate. For what was this cruel deception practised? Oh! duchessa, why was I doomed by your duplicity a victim to unceasing wretchedness?" His voice now faltered; tears gushed from his eyes; his whole frame appeared convulsed; and he sunk, overpowered by agitation, into a chair.

Elvira now, with an air of calm effrontery, astonishing to the guiltless Victoria, replied—"I told you truly that my niece had left me to go into a convent; but on her way thither, by the contrivance, as it appears to me, of conte Vicenza, she unfortunately fell into the power of a banditti who infest the Pyrenees." The duchessa now sketched a slight outline of Victoria's

adventures in Spain, her subsequent shipwreck, and taking refuge in that château; and concluded with saying—"and now De Montfort prepare to hear the most wonderful incident of this eventful narrative. This Hippolyto, who so gallantly rescued my darling girl from impending destruction, possessed sufficient influence to overcome her religious propensities, and is now her husband."

The comte, who had been dreadfully agitated during the duchessa's recital, now starting in horror and amazement from his seat, exclaimed—"A negro, the husband of Victoria!"

"Yes comte, Victoria di Modena, who so firmly rejected the comte de Montfort, is now the wife of an obscure negro."

"I will not believe it," De Montfort replied, trembling with dismay and astonishment. "I cannot believe the dreadful intelligence.—No, no, duchessa, 'tis a horrid sprite you have conjured up to torture further the wretched victim of your deceptions."

Elvira's darkening brow for a moment

threatened a storm; but quickly recovering her self-command, she smiled maliciously.

"Ah! I see by your smiling that you are in jest, duchessa," said the agitated De Montfort; "but why am I to be tortured by such barbarous jests? Do I deserve such cruelty from you? Oh! no, no, you knew too well the situation of my heart before you hurled me down the precipice that has destroyed me. Lady Victoria, may I, dare I, presume to apply to you, to learn if I am of every hope bereft?"

A storm now gathered upon the duchessa's brow that instantly burst forth with dreadful violence. Frantically she flew to the door of Hippolyto's retreat.—"Since you wish for other testimony than my assertions," said she, almost convulsed with rage, "you shall have immediate conviction." Then throwing open the door, her countenance underwent a sudden and conspicuous change. The fire of rage turned to the dark gloom of vengeance, an expression of malicious triumph gleamed in a horrid smile of dæmoniac exultation, and, with her glaring eyes fixed upon De Montfort,

to watch with diabolical satisfaction the operation of those tortures which her frantic jealousy was inflicting, she audibly said—

"Hippolyto del Rosario, I request your presence here, as comte de Montfort wishes for an introduction to the *husband* of Victoria di Modena."

Victoria, almost subdued by astonishment at the motives for her aunt's conduct, which were now unfolding themselves, sat with her eyes riveted to the floor, perplexed and uncertain what part she ought to take in so strange a drama, until De Montfort exclaimed in a tone of much amazement.

"Conte di Urbino!!!"

Victoria in terror, lest Urbino's arrival announced the approach of Polydore, the story of whose death she did not now believe, raised her eyes, and beheld in the elegant dress Hippolyto had worn, not the companion of conte Vicenza, but the identical stranger she had encountered in the church during her captivity, the original of the miniature she had found.

De Montfort's exclamation had also called

the duchessa's attention to the object which excited it; and in a tone of much surprise and great displeasure she said—

"Urbino! What, what could have brought you hither?"

"I am too proud," he replied, "of the honour of being Victoria di Modena's *husband*, not instantly to obey the summons that called upon me to appear as the happiest of mankind."

The different and contending sensations of Victoria's mind threw a momentary suspension over her faculties, and her head sunk upon the elbow of the couch on which she sat.

Her husband flew to support her.

"My life! my Victoria!" he said. His voice recalled her fleeting senses; she opened her eyes and burst into tears.

"Forgive," he exclaimed, "the deceptions I have been compelled to practise; and, oh! pardon me, my Victoria, for thus distressing you by surprise; but the moment required it. When publicly called upon to appear as the husband of Victoria di Modena, I could not degrade her rank and ex-

cellence by producing him in the disguise of an obscure and unknown man. In my own character, I trust, the illustrious house of Modena cannot suffer degradation by owning an alliance with me. As conte di Urbino I now appear, to claim and avow my privilege of protecting from further cruelty and outrage that sacred and precious charge heaven has blessed me, by entrusting to my care."

"Rash, and unthinking boy!" said the duchessa indignantly, "you are not the husband of Victoria. Under the name of Hippolyto you wedded her, therefore she cannot be the wife of Urbino, and is still indisputably under my protection."

"I was too conscious of the value of this hand," he replied, "not to make it mine irrevocably. In my own name, duchessa, I plighted her my vows; and your, but too natural, agitation prevented your observing it. But father Anselmo can satisfy your doubts, and prove my claims, which I will yield only with my life, except to the wishes of Victoria."

Father Anselmo was summoned by the

now dreadfully alarmed duchessa. "Holy father," said she, in the faltering accents of dismay, "in what name did you plight the vows of this young man to Victoria?"

"In his own," the reverend monk replied, "and with the consent of, and in the presence of, the lady's guardian. The marriage is as binding as the church and law can make it."

"Then know, infatuated boy, you have doomed me to an ignominious death, and yourself to endless misery," exclaimed Elvira as she frantically rushed out of the room.

"Conte di Urbino," said the dreadfully agitated De Montfort, "you have used me ill. Knowing, as you did, the situation of my heart, wresting, thus basely, my every hope of happiness from me requires atonement."

"Atonement!" replied Urbino (as we now must beg leave to call him whom our reader has so long known under the name of Hippolyto), "can only be exacted for crimes or injuries, and I have done nothing that I cannot justify. You knew the situation of my heart also; and so far our confi-

dence was mutual. From yourself I learned that lady Victoria was under no engagement to you, nor had she ever fed your passion with a single ray of hope; and from me you learned, that, should circumstances ever permit me to seek for happiness, I would attempt to win the favour of lady Victoria di Modena. Surely then you have no right to impeach my honour, or to demand *atonement!* Chance, or I ought rather to say Providence, made me acquainted with the perils lady Victoria was to be doomed to from the most atrocious plot ever formed by villany; and who shall dare to say I had no right to attempt her rescue. Conceiving myself accountable to no man for my actions, I followed her into Spain, where Providence permitted my attempt to succeed: and her guardian, to crush your hopes at once, bestowed this invaluable hand this morning upon me; and to prove that I well know what such a character as lady Victoria's claims, the first use I shall make of that guardianship so lately consigned to me is to convey my precious charge to an asylum

more suited to her purity. Dare lady Victoria, once more confiding in my honour, intrust herself to my protection?"

Victoria essayed several times to speak before she could articulate. In low and tremulous sounds she said—"O conte di Urbino, why ask me such a question?" Then, with a soft blush of timidity and gratitude animating her lovely countenance, she arose from her seat, and gave her trembling hand to Urbino to lead her. He took it with respect and grateful joy, and turning to Anselmo said—"Holy father, you will, I hope, have the goodness to accompany us to St. Marguerite's."

The holy man acquiesced; and the enraptured Urbino led his lovely bride, attended by the reverend monk, to a coach that was in waiting, leaving comte de Montfort overwhelmed with grief and amazement too great for utterance.

When they reached the carriage, which was stationed in a secluded part of the wood to save Victoria from the prying gaze of the domestics, the good Anselmo returned to the house in quest of Roselia, while Ur-

bino, following Victoria into the coach, sunk on his knees before her.

" Forgive, I implore you, lady Victoria," he said, " the deceptions I have been compelled to practise, and the mystery and silence I am still doomed to persevere in. The undecided state I am forced to leave you in is an additional pang to the torments I must endure until we meet again: but, thanks to Heaven! you will be exempt from the misery, the horrors of incertitude, that during my absence I shall suffer, unknowing whether the most pure, the most exalted happiness, or the extreme of wretchedness, is to be my portion; since, too much respecting the delicacy of your peculiar situation, I dare not at present urge that suit on which the existence of my every hope of happiness depends.

" Having, I trust, completed your emancipation from the power of your vile and faithless guardian, and secured you from the toils of the villanous and profligate, I must go where fate now calls me; but I go only to return with the blessing of a father's presence, to encourage me in my pleadings

for your pity; and, sanctioned by him, to implore the ratification of those vows extorted from your humanity for an unknown man, who, when he dares announce himself, may, he trusts, claim, without degrading her, an alliance with Victoria."

"Rise, conte di Urbino, I entreat you, rise!" said our agitated and embarrassed heroine. "Why should you kneel to me, whom you have known only to heap benefits upon? To you am I not indebted for safety, for escape from destruction in every horrid shape it could assume? And what offence am I to pardon? It was necessary, no doubt, that your form should wear disguise; but your mind partook not of it. *That* I beheld in its own semblance: and—"

Victoria suddenly ceased. A consciousness of all which that mind had awakened in her own arose to her imagination. The deepest blushes suffused her cheeks: she essayed, but in vain, to finish a well-turned compliment she could but the day before have, unembarrassed, paid Hippolyto. Now

the fascinating stranger and Hippolyto were found to be the same. One had won her tenderest esteem, the other had charmed her fancy; and between the two characters she found her heart was irrevocably gone. Her consciousness alarmed her delicacy; and her fears, lest a too energetic delivery of her sentiments should betray her, robbed her of that ease which best could have concealed her feelings—feelings that, now surcharged by a variety of sensations, could not be repressed; and she burst into tears. The enraptured Urbino beheld her confusion with transport, and, while he construed it to his own advantage, appeared not to observe it: but rising from his knees, and respectfully taking the seat beside her, he said—

"Since lady Victoria has the goodness to pardon my deceptions, perhaps she will allow me to plead for a place in her friendship: even the peculiar delicacy of her present situation cannot prohibit my soliciting for that."

"Most certainly"— Victoria hastily re-

plied, happy in an opportunity of answering to any thing to which she could speak without perturbation — "conte di Urbino has, as well he merits, my sincere friendship."

"Then, as your friend," he said, "may I not presume to hope you will feel anxious for my safety, and that you will permit me sometimes to address you in the language of friendship, to tell you where I am, how I am, and as much of my proceedings as I am permitted to reveal?"

"Every privilege that friendship can claim," replied our heroine, "my preserver shall find me anxious to allow him."

At this moment father Anselmo returned with Roselia, to whom he had imparted the metamorphosis of Hippolyto. Almost frantic with joy, she bounded into the coach, since Urbino was the very man she had for some time ardently wished to see—the husband of her beloved lady. On her knees she now threw herself; and taking a hand of each breathed forth the most animated prayers for their happiness, intermingled with the most extravagant expressions of

joy which her affectionate and glad heart could dictate; and as she arose from her knees to make room for the good monk to occupy the fourth place in the coach, she exultingly said—

"Now, now I shall die happy, since my fond wish is fulfilled. Conte di Urbino is the only man in the whole world who merits my inestimable lady; and lady Victoria is the only woman upon earth who has a right to such a husband."

"The only woman who has a right to him!" said Victoria mentally. "Oh, Matilda!"——Her heart ceased to throb with hope, the knell of blasted happiness struck heavily upon her soul; her senses sickened, and her aching head sunk for a resting-place against the coach side; for, oh! what a shade now appeared in the character of Urbino, darkening at once that which but for this would have seemed as clear and bright as the hand of nature could pourtray!

"But is it, can it be possible," thought she, "that Urbino is one of those cruel, cruel beings who steal insidiously into the un-

suspicious maid's affections, and then forsake her, allured by the first fair face that strikes his roving fancy?"—Bitter remembrance told our agonised heroine it was too true: the words of Matilda still vibrated in her ears, and poured dire conviction, and its concomitant miseries, into her throbbing heart. Oh, how she wished that she could transform her husband back into the humble Hippolyto, in whom had appeared no shade but in complexion!—"Yet," continued the suggestions of her upright mind "the vows I have just plighted to him are not irrevocable; he told me so himself, and I will annul the marriage; for Urbino, my preserver, my brave deliverer, shall not deserve the name of villain. No; the grateful Victoria will preserve his fame; the wrongs of Matilda shall not tarnish it. He cannot know that he is in possession of my affections, nor shall he be withheld from the lovely injured Matilda by any claim a knowledge of my sentiments might lead him to imagine I had upon his heart—for this day we part, never more to meet. Yes, Urbino,

to your fame I will make this sacrifice—never will I again see you. Reflexion in such a mind as his will soon destroy delusion: he will think of his meditated injuries to Matilda with abhorrence, and his ingenuous heart will lead him back to her and rectitude—while to resignation will I devote myself and sorrows, and within some peaceful convent-walls pass the remainder of my hapless days."

Whilst these determinations agonised our grieved heroine's mind, Urbino, attentive only to her, too quickly divined her thoughts in respect to him were undergoing some unfavourable revolution; and pensive and miserable he became: for, in total ignorance of her knowledge of Matilda, he could form no conjecture of what could thus suddenly have filled her ingenuous mind with unpropitious thoughts of him. But, anxious to clear all doubts, and to relieve his mind from the tortures of suspense and apprehension, he hastily, as the coach moved from the château of comte de Montfort, addressed himself to father Anselmo—

" It was my intention, you know, holy father, not to leave St. Lewis until the arrival of signora Farinelli, whom lady Victoria expects shortly at St. Marguerite's: but I have now changed my plans, and will this very day set out for Rome—since, why should the man whose heart knows no guile, and who sickens at the semblance of disguise, continue enveloped in mystery, and wear the appearance of dissimulation one moment longer than is absolutely necessary? And so truly wretched shall I be, while doomed to this state of uncertainty relative to the dearest hopes of my life, that I shall not rest until I can emerge from the clouds of mystery, and appear, with a fame as free from reproach as her own, before lady Victoria, to plead for a ratification of those sacred vows the villany of her guardian extorted from her this morning."

Victoria sighed heavily. " How ingenuous his language sounds!" thought she: " But does not conscience thrill one pang through his heart for the injuries of Matilda?" —She attempted to steal a glance at him, to

observe the changes of countenance she doubted not the silent monitor of man must inspire. But Urbino, watchful of all her movements, caught the glance; and its expression struck painfully upon his heart. It implied doubt and inquiry; and, deeply hurt and afflicted, his cheeks flushed the crimson of indignant conscious worth, swelling in sullen dignity at the injustice of suspicion, while extreme misery wrung his soul in the torturing idea that his Victoria—his adored, his idolised Victoria—could not esteem, or she would not suspect him. All his fond hopes of happiness now fled at once; tears of anguish started to his eyes; deep sighs, almost groans, heaved heavily from his heart; and, the most mournful of Sorrow's sons, his head sunk in despondence upon his breast.

Victoria attentively observed all this, and attributed all to the workings of conscience, upon a sudden recollection of the lovely injured Matilda: and vain was now every effort of the good monk and Roselia to inspire this truly wretched pair with any gleam

of cheerfulness, or draw them for a moment from their sad and afflicting meditations.

At length they reached the convent of St. Marguerite's, where the venerable abbess welcomed our trembling and agitated heroine with the unaffected, cordial kindness of sincerity; and the miserable and dreadfully perturbed Urbino consigned his Victoria, in the most solemn and affecting manner, to the protection of the abbess and the church: all which father Anselmo, in a truly awfully impressive manner, enforced.

Urbino, wretched beyond conception, could scarcely conceal his agonising emotions; and, anxious to be where he could give free indulgence to his surcharged feelings, hastened the moment of his departure. In the most pitiable agitation he bade a hurried yet touching adieu to his adored Victoria, who, firmly resolved that they should meet no more, felt shaken to the very soul; yet exerted herself to the utmost stretch of her fortitude to conceal the

anguish of her heart, whilst she said "Farewell!"—But the moment the door closed that shut out, as she believed, Urbino from her sight for ever, she fell, deprived of sense and respiration, into Roselia's arms.

END OF VOL. II.

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